

A  
**Conference**  
Between an  
**Orthodox Christian**  
AND A  
**SOCINIAN.**  
IN FOUR  
**DIALOGUES.**

Wherein  
The late distinction of a *Real* and *Nominal* Trinitarian is Considered.

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# THE PREFACE.

**I**T is hard to determine which is the greatest misfortune, either to give an easy assent to whatever Doctrine is propos'd to us, or value our selves upon pretended difficulties, and deny incontestable Articles, because they are not altogether free from them? It seems to me as dangerous an error to disbelieve, as to believe every thing: The one being the effect of a prodigious weakness, and the other of an incredible presumption; both equally inconsistent with Reason, which cannot but be sensible, that as there are things visibly false to the meanest Capacity, so there are those which the greatest penetration cannot reach, and yet are certainly true.

This carries so much evidence along with it, that it is granted in all our Moral and Philosophical inquiries. We are witnesses of innumerable events, the causes of which we guess at, but can give no clear account of. The springs of most transactions in the World are hid from Mankind, and lie in an unfathomable obscurity, plain to none but him to whom Darkness is as light as the Day. The same must be said of our search about natural objects. Nature so obvious every where, has yet secret recesses which all our sagacity cannot penetrate. We are agreed concerning

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cerning its operations ; but as for their principles they have been disputed of from the beginning, and will be to the end of the World. The Men of thoughts and reflexion concluding daily, that there are on all sides mighty difficulties and never to be overcome.

But it is strange that this should be granted with so much equity and freedom in that sort of Matters, and deny'd of Religion ; which being of a bigger and more abstruse Nature, and of a far greater Authority than all the Dictates of Men, should by its own weight silence all Objections, and put positive Mortals in mind that a transcendent Object ceases not to be, because we cannot take an exact view of it, and that a Divine Proposition loses not the Character of Truth, because we form difficulties against it.

And yet this is the case of Socinianism. The Gentlemen who have suffer'd themselves to be led into it, deny the Mysteries of Christianity, insisting on their unreasonableness, pretending that they are not oblig'd to believe that of which they have not a clear Notion ; and with a sort of assurance which becomes no Man, and them least of all ; charging the Sacred Doctrine with the scandalous imputations of contradiction and nonsense. This is the design of their last Collection of Prints ; the perpetual descant in conversation, and a contrivance to keep the dispute alive, till that being ruin'd, they must of necessity set up something else.

But indeed either we argue to give life to a party, or else we act sincerely, conscientiously, and with a design to find out and establish the Truth. If the first, God is greater than our Hearts, and knows all things. He will punish so mean and so sordid an end which does not vindicate, but prostitute Religion. But if  
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*the last, I must beg leave to say, that there is neither Truth, Piety, or Modesty in all that noise. Is it come to that, that I must call a Doctrine unreasonable, because my Reason is weak and cannot understand every part of it? Do I own my doubtfulness and ignorance in all other things, and am only secure and clear-sighted in this? Or admit Mysteries in most of Nature's Operations, and exclude them only from Religion? Happy Man who can tie the Hands of his Creatour, and force him to impose nothing on his belief but what is plain and intelligible!*

*What high strain of good manners is this to call that Non-sence and Contradiction, which the Church of God from the very beginning of Christianity to this time, and in all the parts of the World where it is receiv'd, has so highly reverenc'd? As if our guides in Spiritual Matters had been no more than a company of Mad-men, who have fill'd our Heads with crude, impertinent and contradictory Notions.*

*This is so much the worse in these Gentlemen, because they cannot but be acquainted, that Philosophy was never, and is not to be appeal'd to in these disputes: The certainty of our belief depending on a nobler and more infallible Principle, even the Authority of God speaking in the Sacred Scriptures. The Fathers never doubted but that Difficulties would ever be rais'd in the treating of our Mysteries, but thought this sufficiently over-ru'd by the very consideration of God's own determination in that Revelation which he has made of himself. Whether these Gentlemen will or no, this must be the last resolution of this great Controversy. Let them think of it in earnest, and they will agree with me that it cannot be otherwise.*

*This method I follow'd and urg'd again and again*

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to a Friend, for whose sake I writ and publish'd the Four Letters. They seem'd to me to have made some impression on him; and as he is a Person of Candor, he own'd that it was beyond his Ability to Answer, but would expect what the Socinian writers had to say to them. After some time an Answer came out: But as I must do them the justice to acknowledge that they have us'd me in it with a great deal of civility, and shew'd that deep studies had not spoil'd in them good breeding; a fault too too common in Learned Men! So I am forc'd to complain that they have not so much as touch'd any one part of my Book. But taking no care either of vindicating the unwary Assertions of their Authors, or answering those substantial Arguments which were laid before them; they serv'd me as they had done others before, contenting themselves with a handsome declamation about their new and chimerical distinction of Real and Nominal Trinitarians; insisting on the incomprehensibility and contradiction of the Christian Doctrine; and, what is pleasant enough, arguing against its unreasonableness, without so much as examining any one of the plain Reasons given for it.

My Friend then was arm'd with two new Topicks. He would call upon me, and ask me whether I was a Real or a Nominal Trinitarian? He would maintain that his Reason could not yield to what is unreasonable, or be bound to assent to what is Contradictory or at best Incomprehensible. I thought then my self oblig'd for his sake in particular, and in general for the good of the Christian Cause, to which we are all debtors, to take a view of these two Engines of the Socinian make. This is the occasion of the following Papers, in which this distinction is examin'd, the  
dispute

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dispute between them and us brought back to the true state of the question, viz. the Authority of the Sacred Writings, The nature of Faith and Reason, and the Superiority of the first over the last establish'd, and the bounds of both assign'd. I hope that having no other end in this but doing good, they will satisfy him for whom they are written, and work on those whom a mistaken Conscience has made to persist in so dangerous an error.

All this is treated by way of Conference and Dialogues: A manner of Writing usual in the Primitive times, as appears by Justin Martyr, Theodoret, St. Jerom, &c. And famous amongst us by several late excellent Books of that kind. It has that advantage, that being properly an imitation of Conversation, all is easy and natural in it. A Reader is not put on the rack by that intense study, which a tedious Argument requires. And even the Repetitions and Digressions which in a Conference are unavoidable, have somewhat in them which is very taking. I have been as sparing as I could of citations, hard words, or any thing which might obscure or perplex the Subject. For besides the Solidity of our Reasonings, there must be an exquisite plainness, and familiarity in Dialogues, which if an Author can attain, nothing more is to be desir'd in that sort of Writing.

But before I conclude this, I must say that of all Writers these Gentlemen ought not to value themselves, because they have rais'd a great deal of dust which their own prejudice hinders them from laying. They complain of difficulties, and at every word cry out Unreasonable, Contradictory, Incomprehensible: Whereas no People who attempted to put our

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*Holy Religion out of doors, ever oppos'd to it a more Vereasonable, Contradictory, and Incomprehensible System than they have done.*

*I will not speak of their Incomprehensible explanations, such as are that of Joh. 1. that of Phil. 2. Coloss. 1. Heb. 1. &c. which no Man in his right senses can make any thing of, and are a direct Contradiction to the other part of the Divine Oracles. But I will only beg of them to reconcile their robbing Christ of his Divinity, to the adoring of him, praying to him, and making him an object of Divine Worship. I should be glad they would shew us, how it is consistent with Reason, that A meer Man, A meer Creature, such as they make Christ to be, can offer himself a sufficient Expiation, a propitiatory Sacrifice for the Sins of the whole World. This the Author of the Brief History has granted. This is reported to have been acknowledged by Charitable Mr. F. at his death. This Mr. T. one of their writers so largely commended by the Author of the last Answer to My Lord of Worcester's late Vindication of the Holy Trinity, has plainly call'd an Extravagance. I am mistaken, says he, Christianity not Myster. pag. 25. if either the Socinians, or the Arrians can make their Notions of a DIGNIFY'D AND CREATURE-GOD CAPABLE OF DIVINE WORSHIP, appear more reasonable than the extravagancies of other Sects, touching the Article of the Trinity.*

*When they have justify'd all this, and a great deal more which may be objected to them; then, and not before, they may lay claim to, and stand by their pretended Inconsistencies. But till that is done, they must only be look'd upon as a remarkable instance of humane*

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humane infirmity, which not contented to rely on that solid Foundation, which the Redeemer of the World and his Apostles have left us, settles in a barren and dry Ground where no Water is. There is no Man but what can easier pull down, than build up. Let us but want Humility, and abound in our own Sense, which is as often our Sin, as our Misfortune, and we shall easily have objections in store against the Christian Faith. But then we leave the Rock to build on the Sand. And when we have done all that we can by our fine discourses, it will be Sand still: The Structure will tumble to the ground, and great will be the fall of it.

If these Gentlemen think fit to say any thing to these Papers, they are humbly intreated that they will not use them, as they did the Four Letters; that is, put out an Answer where nothing either directly, or indirectly is answer'd. If they only write to satisfy me that they are Men of Learning, and Masters of all the Graces of Elocution, I am convinc'd of it already, and they may spare themselves that trouble. 'Tis not so much Language and Oratory, as Argument and Reason which we expect at their hands.

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Books

*Books Printed for Thomas Bennet, at the  
Half-Moon in St. Paul's Church-Yard.*

**R**emarks on some late Writings of the English Socinians, in *Four Letters*, done at the Request of a Socinian Gentleman. By *H. de Luzancy*, B. D. Minister of *Doverc.* and *Harwich*.

The Inspiration of the New Testament asserted and explained ; in answer to the *Six Letters of Inspiration* from *Holland*, &c. By Mr. *Le Moth*.

*A Conference with a Theist*, in two Parts. By *W. Nicholls*, Rector of *Selfey* in *Suffex*.

The Certainty and Necessity of Religion in General ; or the first Grounds and Principles of Humane Duty Established. In eight Sermons at Mr. *Boyle's* Lecture for the Year 1697. By *F. Gastrell*, B. D. and Student of *Christ-Church Oxon*.

Certain Considerations for the better Establishment of the Church of *England* ; with a Preface by *James Harrington Esq.*

A Sermon Preach'd before the Honourable House of Commons, on the Anniversary Fast, for the Martyrdom of King *Charles* the first. By *E. Langford* D. D.

A Sermon before the Lord Mayor, Judges, and Aldermen, at the Cathedral of *St. Paul*, on the thirtieth of *January*, 1697. By *S. Estwick*, B. D. and Chaplain of *Christ-Church Oxon*.

*In the Press.*

Twelve Sermons upon several Occasions. By *Robert South*. D. D. Never before Printed.

Dr. *Bentley's* Dissertation upon the Epistles of *Phalaris*, &c. and the Fables of *Æsop* Examined. By the Honourable *Charles Boyle*, Esq. A



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A  
Conference

Between an  
*Orthodox Christian*

AND A  
*SOCINIAN.*

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The First  
DIALOGUE.

*Socinian.*

**V**ELL! I see, there  
is no end of disput-  
ing; and if that  
spirit once possesses

Men, they have the misfortune never to know  
when to have done. Yesterday, at four in the  
afternoon the Doctor and your Friend enter'd  
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the lifts ; It was Nine at Night , before they could be perswaded to sit down, and take their share of a Curious entertainment which Mr. N. at whose House they were , had prepar'd for them. Every thing was neat and fine, the Company select and good ; and yet all this which makes Men Sociable and inclin'd to please one another, had no such effect on these two great Spirits. They had much ado to forbear breaking out ; and if they had been let alone, I really believe that they would be disputing still.

*Orthodox.* Pray, what was the subject of this long dispute ?

*Socin.* The great Controversy of the Age, *Socinianism* ; That which the Church of *England* endeavours to run down with so much vehemency ; and has been lately defended by several ingenious Men, whose Writings I am satisfy'd you are no stranger to.

*Orthod.* What could they say in all that time ? They are both Men of Learning , and I suppose method too, without which Learning is of no use, and becomes only a large heap of rich Materials without beauty or strength, because without order or disposition.

*Socin.* All that I could perceive of both sides, was very little reason or Argument ; But a World of heat and clamor ; Perpetual reflections either on the Church or the *Socinians* , rude expressions, and an insufferable shifting and running from one thing to another.

*Orthod.* Truly, this is the misery of disputes, which for want of good and sincere management become a fatigue, and a labour not to be overcome.

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come. Books come as much short of it, as Conversation. The Writers and the Readers are equally unfortunate in this, the one not giving that which they promise, and the other being disappointed of that which they look for, and that is, Information.

*Socin.* For this very reason I have almost vow'd to dispute no more. I will hate the very Name of Controversy; and no Book of that Nature shall find Room in my Library. Time may be spent much better than in endeavoring to understand an Author, who does not understand himself. An infinite Stock of Patience is necessary to bear with a dull, flat, and insipid Writer. Nor was I ever made to be a Witness, to all their heats and follies, who load their Adversary with ill Language, because he is not of their Opinion.

*Orthod.* I am not of your mind. That which is good cannot cease to be such because it is abus'd. Inquiry after Truth is the Noblest endeavour, as well as the most Natural inclination of Mankind. And disputing is the way which leads to it. It is by comparing Argument with Argument, and Reason with Reason, that at last it does appear. In the State of Weakness, that we are in, Thinking and Reflection are the only helps we have, and it is from striking the flint and the flint together, that the blessed fire breaks out, which improv'd removes our darkness. We have very few Self-Evident Principles; and from them, we do not always draw true, and exact consequences. The Mine must be open'd and digg'd with a great deal of Labour; till we come

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to the precious *Ore*. But once found, it yields an inestimable treasure. In a word, it is by the opposition and difference of Men in their opinions, that we come to examine, reflect, inquire, and at last find out the Truth.

*Socin.* I grant all this : But when disputing is so wholly perverted as to become a sanctuary to Error : When two contending Parties are so obstinate as not to yield the least Point : and it is no more whether what I say is true, but what I say must be true : When Books are fill'd up and grow to large volumes and yet nothing to the purpose : When all degenerates into heat and passion ; I think it time to have done, keep my sense of things to my self, and meddle no more with disputes.

*Orthod.* What you say is too true. We have a large experience that several have Writ of subjects which they never understood, and others have pretended to answer objections which they have wholly mistaken. Like those Translators, Who have assassinated several Authors, and disfigur'd many admirable and Original Pieces, for want of understanding both the Language out of which they translated, and their own, which they translated into. It is also evident that Divine Matters have been treated with very little piety ; As if God was not to be consulted when Man presumes to speak of him, and the heart as well as the mind, was not to guide the hand of the Writer. But yet for all this, there are Books of this kind, which cannot be sufficiently admir'd. so clear they are and yet so concise ; so eloquent and yet so grave ; so Candid and yet so

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so home, that it is hard to say, whether they are more commended by the present Age, or shall be more admir'd by posterity.

*Socin.* Pray where are those *Phoenix's* to be found? For they are so rare, that they really deserve that name.

*Orthod.* Not so very rare neither. What Curious Writings did the Reign of *Charles* the Second produce in Defence of the Unity and Peace of the Church? How was *Poper*y treated in that of *James* the Second? With what solidity and clearness did our Divines argue with the Emisseries of *Rome*, never starting from the state of the question, or the main stress of the difficulty propos'd? And in this of *William* the Third, when the *Socinian* Controversy which had slept some years began to awake again, and to promise it self some increase from the looseness of Men's principles, and from some other unhappy Circumstances unknown but to very few; How did the Church rowse up, and with what Zeal, what Learning, what success did they oppose the growing *Heresy*?

*Socin.* I own that some good Books have been written against the *Nonconformists*, and many excellent ones against the Church of *Rome*. But for your success against *Socinianism*, it is indeed much to be admir'd. Is it not notorious that all your Writings have not brought one over to a Recantation; and that though the Sect does not thrive much in the Country where Conversation is more rare, yet it visibly gets ground in the Town? There is scarce a Wit but what is a *Socinian*. If *Socinianism* is a rank Poison, I can

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assure you that the young Gentlemen swallow it with greediness. One whisper'd me not long since, that it is got even amongst some eminent *Lawyers*. Many of your Clergy themselves are not free from the aspersions. *Socinianism* is publickly disown'd and hated ; but privately much made of and caress'd. I am afraid, if your Universities were search'd, it would be found that the sinful Weed grows there too.

*Orthod.* What you say is that which we now exclaim'd against, and that is Reflecting. But when all is done the trick is stale, and not like to take. There never was yet so despicable a Sect in the World, but what was willing to insinuate that their numbers were far greater than what really they appear'd. A piece of Vanity laugh'd at every where by Men of Sense ! But in this the *Socinians* are unhappy. For they are *a Self* and *no Self*, *a Body* and *no Body*. Some particular Persons have been Intoxicated with reading *Socinus*, *Crellius*, &c. They have corrected and improv'd many of their Notions. These they have put into several short, and truly Elegant Writings ; and having had the happiness to be answer'd by Men every way Great, it gave a general curiosity to read what these Authors had said, which should arm so many famous Pens against them. This has perswaded them into a belief that they have a croud of followers : And as formerly the *Arrians* in the disputes against *Arrianism*, so in these against *Socinianism*, they fantasie that the whole World is become *Socinian*.

But I will presume to say, that it is nothing but fancy. Men do not so easily part with the Faith  
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in which they were baptiz'd, and in which the hope of their Eternal Salvation consists. They may give some sway to curiosity, and the Gay Novelty may take for a while. But Conscience returns, and will not suffer them to shake off at once all the Principles of our Holy Religion.

That the young Gentlemen greedily swallow the Poison, is a real mistake. I confess, and it is much to be lamented, that several amongst them are much debauch'd in their Morals, and that the rage of Lust, and that of Wine, have strangely obscur'd their understandings. But, believe me, profane and dissolute Persons are no Honour to any Profession whatsoever. If you are fond of such an Addition, take them and call them *Socinians*, I promise not to be angry at it.

*Socin.* What you say is true in a great measure, but give me leave——

*Orthod.* But give me leave your self to make an end of speaking, to what you said of the Wits of the Town. I ever had a Notion of Wit different from that of the Wits themselves. They are careful to distinguish Wit from Sence. And with this poor Notion the Poets have courted, or anger'd the Pit these twenty years in their *Prologues* and *Epilogues*. As if he could be a Man of Wit who is not a Man of Sence. For Wit and Sence are inseparable. An *Effervescency* of imagination, breaking out into some fine Expressions is not Wit, but a sort of lucky Madness. He that thinks and speaks well, is exact and coherent, grave or florid according to his Subject, but always modest and inoffensive, is to me the Man of Wit. Pray tell me how many of these are *Socinians*.

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But for the Men of Sallies and unbounded Thoughts, who value themselves upon Writing a few Verses, and perhaps a small Pamphlet; who think as they live, and live as they think; that is, most irregularly; I abandon them to you. They shall be *Socinians* if you please: I promise once more not to be angry at it. What sort of Wit is that conscientious Spark, who writ lately an Apology for self-murder? What think you of the Author of *Christianity not Mystrious*? Or of the Writer of one of the two Epistles to Mr. *Gailhard*. I mean the second, which is as wild and ill written, as the first is modest and fine. Put these also into the Catalogue, and then boast of your Conquests.

*Socin*. I hope you are not of this Mr. *Gailhard*'s mind, who is for sanguinary Laws to be enacted against us; and would have us meet at *Smithfield*, with the fate of *Servetus* at *Geneva*, and *Valentinus Gentilis* at *Berne*.

*Orthod*. I never heard of Mr. *Gailhard*, or of his design against you, till I read your Letters against him. But if there were such Laws, you would still be safe. For I dare say, neither you, nor your Friends, will ever be the Martyrs of *Socinianism*. But to speak seriously my thoughts, that Gentleman does not know what Spirit he is of. It is against that Religion of which *Christ* is the Author, to thirst after the Blood of any Man. The Church of *Rome* is admirably well acquainted with these methods of reclaiming People. Ours is a stranger to it, and takes a way much more agreeable, both to the nature of the Gospel, and the condition of a Rational Creature;



Creature; and that is, to deliver the Truth which God hath trusted her with, adding to it all suitable Arguments of persuasion, and leaving the rest to the Mercy and Providence of God. In a word, if exhorting, disputing, arguing, persuading, will not do, I know no other way, except excommunication: It being highly just, that the Church should cut off an infected Member, which by an obstinate opposition to her Doctrine, is like to spread the contagion through the other parts of the Body.

*Socin.* It is not because I am a *Socinian*, that I acknowledge this to be a truly *Christian* temper: For it is the very Voice of Religion: But I hope you will not take it ill, if I tell you, that if you have no other way to assert, and propagate your Doctrine, than exhorting, persuading, disputing, I am afraid this design of yours, though good and honest, will at last prove unsuccessful.

*Orthod.* Why it should be so I cannot imagine: For with a Rational Agent, what can prevail more than Reason? And with Learned Men, what more than Learning? What can you prescribe besides disputing, to bring them to the acknowledgment of their Errours?

*Socin.* But you have disputed so long, and yet to so little purpose, that it shews a deficiency in your very Method. Not only your ordinary Divines have been concern'd in the quarrel, but even Men of vast esteem amongst you, and yet what have they done? When I read their Books, and compare them with the *Socinian* Answers; or the *Socinian* Books with your Vindications and Apologies,

Apologies ; Good God ! How clearly do I see the strength of our reasons ! You keep always in a Cloud, afraid of being seen ; Whereas all is clear and safe about us.

*Orthod.* It is so far from that, that with People of Ordinary equity the quite contrary will appear. The *Socinian* Controversy is certainly the greatest of all those which ever exerciz'd the Church of God. The modern disputes you are perfectly acquainted with, and cannot but be sensible that though many and large volumes have been written about them, yet they lie within a very narrow compass. Rob the controverted Points between us, and the Church of *Rome*, of the Trappings of Discourse, Digressions, and Clamors of their Authors, they are brought to a very plain and short issue. Transubstantiation, worship of Images, Purgatory, praying to the Saints, the Divine right of the *Pope's* supremacy, and his pretended infallibility, are doctrines easily made to appear to be not only false, but even new in the Church of *Rome* it self. As the subject is absolutely within our reach, so are the Arguments for and against them.

The same you must own of the unhappy differences between us and the Nonconformists ; and though much has been written on both sides ; yet at last whether the exceptions against the Publick *Liturgy* are solid ? Whether a *Schism* may be grounded upon the imposition of a few innocent Ceremonies ? Whether disobedience to Episcopal Government can be justify'd, for which, without inquiring whether the institution is Divine, or not, there appears so Ancient, so Universal,

versal, and so uncontested a Tradition? Are questions of so easy a resolution, that if there was nothing but Religion at the bottom, that War would quickly be at an End.

Read also the Catalogue of Ancient Heresies, as they have been left us by Ecclesiastical Writers; supposing them all to be Heresies, though indeed many are only Foolish and Simple Opinions; There is scarce one of any importance but as it relates some way or other to this great Controversy. The rest are trifles and dreams, which we now wonder how they could ever fall into, and busy Rational Men's heads, as Posterity will be amaz'd, when they come to examine the poor and silly differences of this quarrelling Age.

*Socin.* But what of all this?

*Orthod.* This is to shew you that in our debates with the *Socinians*, as the dispute is, so are the Arguments of another nature, than those in that sort of Controversies, which we have been speaking of. The matter is abstruse and mysterious; We are not willing to speak more of God, than he himself has taught us. This you call obscurity and want of satisfaction: and because the *Socinians* are perpetually reasoning of an Increased and Incomprehensible Substance, as they do of Finite and Created Beings; and are never weary of applying their notions of what they understand, to what they understand not at all, and has no sort of proportion to it; Then you say, that their writings are clear. I appeal to your self whether you are not highly unjust to us? Nay, whether any one Controversy in the World, was ever manag'd with so little Candor as this is by you?

*Socin.*

*Socin.* But pray how have you manag'd it? Forgive me if I tell you that the Church never shew'd so much Weakness in any thing as in this very particular. You are angry with us for Reasoning too much: and you have Reason'd your selves out of doors. You pretended to assert a Trinity, and cannot tell us what that Trinity is. You are *Trinitarians* indeed, but at the same time the sad Assertors of a Trinity which is too much, or too little: Degenerates into *Tritheism*, or *Sabellianism*; and if receiv'd according to some explications is *Real*, and Blasphemous; and if according to others, is *Nominal*, and signify's nothing.

*Orthod.* Truly, I wonder this was not yet come out. For you cannot now speak to a *Socinian*, but he brings in this right or wrong. The Author of the considerations of the several explications of the Trinity, made the best of it, and perswaded himself that he had given us the mortal wound. The Writer of the discourse concerning the *Real* and *Nominal Trinitarians* promises himself no less than the ruine of the Church if the fatal distinction is carry'd on, and improv'd as it ought to be. He that dawbs with untemper'd mortar, and calls himself a *Prebyter of the Church of England*, is of the same mind. The whole Church, say they, Condemns the *Real Trinitarians*; and the *Nominals* being rank *Sabellians* must of course be condemn'd too. Blessed discovery, which when truly examin'd is the greatest piece of unsincerity imaginable!

*Socin.* I must beg leave to interrupt you, and blame you for denying that which is clearer than the

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the Sun. Where lies then the unsincerity? Is it in affirming that you will not tell us what your Trinity is? Or is it in distributing you into *Real and Nominal Trinitarians*?

*Orthod.* 'Tis in every part of the Allegation. Can any thing be more unsincere, than for you to tell us, that we oblige you to believe a *Trinity*, and are not willing to tell you what that *Trinity* is? Pray, were you ever Baptiz'd? Have you ever paid your Duty to God in the solemn use of our excellent Liturgy? Did you ever join in the *Doxology*, by which the Church in the Primitive Ages down to ours, put in the mouth of her Children a confutation of the *Samosatenian, Sabellian, Arrian, Nestorian, and Macedonian* Heresies? Did you ever make a profession of that Faith which you embrac'd in your Baptism, by reciting the *Apostolical* and *Catholick* Creeds? Did you ever read the Articles of the Church of *England*, or of any other Church in the World? For I positively averr that they do all and every one of them speak and assert the same thing.

*Socin.* True: They tell us of a *Trinity*, but do not tell us what that *Trinity* is.

*Orthod.* Do they not tell you that God is one; That in that one adorable and Divine Nature are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; That the Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God; and yet not three Gods, but one God? This is to tell you that there is a Blessed *Trinity*, and what that *Trinity* is.

*Socin.* True again: But they do not tell us how God can be One and Three? How that  
*Trinity*

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*Trinity* and *Unity* are reconcil'd? How every Person is God, and yet but one God? and if they do not say this, in effect they say nothing.

*Orthod.* This is the arrantest Sophism that ever was, or can be us'd in a dispute. The Church asserts the thing because God has asserted it. He has not been pleas'd to reveal the manner, and therefore the Church says nothing to it. All is built upon the Divine Revelation. Must we not believe that a thing is, when God has affirm'd that it is, because he has not thought fit to make clear to us how it is?

Should I tell you that the Sun is a luminous Body, which by dispersing its Beams over all the Creation, gives Light and Colour to every thing; and that the earth is impregnated by certain qualities, which with an admirable luxuriance cover it with Fruits and Flowers: Would you deny this, because I do not acquaint you, how that Body is luminous, how the impressions of light mix with all things, and shew what they are? Would you deny the fruitfulness of the Earth, because I cannot explain those qualities by which it is impregnated?

*Socin.* This reaches not at all the difficulty. For these are things of sense, which I am satisfy'd to be, and to exist. Besides, I am capable of Philosophical inquiries, by which if I do not certainly know the *How*, I come at least very near it.

*Orthod.* But this not only reaches the difficulty but wholly resolves it. For your Philosophical inquiries are but inquiries, things for the most part uncertain. But that wherein the stress of  
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the difficulty lies, is the degree of certainty, by which we are assur'd that such a thing is. And I say that the Divine Revelation, is infinitely more certain than the fullest testimony of Sense; and that if I am satisfy'd that God has reveal'd a *Trinity*, I am more assur'd that there are Three Persons in the Divine Nature, than I am assur'd that the Sun is a luminous, and the Earth a fruitful Body; though I could understand how the one shines, and how the other is actuated into so many several forms.

*Socin.* Then now the Church of *Rome* will give you thanks: For this is the very *Topick* us'd in the famous case of *Transubstantiation*.

*Orthod.* This is one of the *Socinian* Common Places. But not to spend time about so little an objection, which will carry the digression too far; let me tell you that a *Topick* may be good, but yet ill and falsely apply'd. In that dispute between them and us, we deny the Divine Revelation. We say, God has not reveal'd it. But to return:

You make a mighty noise with your distinction of *Real* and *Nominal Trinitarians*, and pretend that it is the natural result of several explications of the *Trinity*. To overthrow this at once, it is enough to say, that the Church owns no particular explication of this *Divine Mystery*; nor concerns herself with what private Authors have said of it. The Church has spoke in general Councils, and National Synods. We have her Mind in her publick Confessions of Faith. She is so far from espousing any sort of explication, that she ever thought that that great *Mystery* could not be explain'd. The

The Church suffers Men to write concerning these matters: St. *Austin* has given several considerable reasons for it, in his Books on this very Subject, and in that *de utilit. credend.* The opposing of Heresy, the improvement of Piety, the study of the Holy Scriptures, of which this makes so considerable a part, are the principal. But to think that the Church will stand by all the Opinions of private Writers, and own their errors and mistakes, is a prodigious inadvertency. What Church in the World can be safe, if made to answer for all the Authors of her Communion?

What becomes then of the objection? It is all overthrown in this one word. The Church has nothing to do with those explications, which the *Socinians* fanſie they have so much expos'd. And as for the explications themselves, I believe that if the Judicious *Hooker*, and the Learned *Cudworth* were alive, you durst not so much as name them. The rest are Men of great abilities, who can arm in their defence, no better Pens than their own.

*Socin.* But do you put Bishops, and eminent Bishops too in the rank of private Persons? Who can best speak the sence of the Church, but those who are call'd by the Fathers, the *Husbands of their Churches*, the *Keepers of the Canons*, and the *Succeſſors of the Apostles*? Some seem to be *Tritheists*, and others seem to be *Sabellians*.

*Orthod.* Truly you have us'd the Bishops in your Writings, as if they had been no more than private Persons; the reflections on their *Lordships* having been so sharp and so many. *His Grace*



## Orth. Christian and a Socinian. 17

*Grace* the late Arch-Bishop, whom by your own confession you ought to have reverenc'd, was not free from your aspersions. My Lord of *Glocester* has had his share. In the latest answer to my Lord of *Sarum*, you forget the large *Encomiums* given him before. The Bishop of *Worcester*, for whom the Learned World has so just a value, met in the answer to his late Book, with the same way of Entertainment. But laying all this aside and answering your meaning; A Bishop, with all the respect due to the Sacred Dignity, is still a private Doctor. Nor can the Church be favourable to his explications if they are contrary to her Doctrine. But what of all this? Our Bishops are all *Orthodox*.

*Socin*. I do not know what you mean by *Orthodox*. There is no *Orthodoxy* but Truth. They who teach Three Gods cannot be *Orthodox*; and this is done by the *Real Trinitarians*. The *Socinians* believe and adore but one; and this is done by the *Nominals*. The greatest part of the Church goes, I confess, that way, and therefore it is *Orthodox* because *Socinian*. In short, we may talk till Dooms day, and never be the Wiser. The question at last must be this, are you a *Real*, or a *Nominal Trinitarian*? If a *Real*, then we shall never be reconcil'd; If a *Nominal*, then we are certainly agreed.

*Orthod*. What I have said already seems to me to be satisfactory: But since you are not contented with it, let us examine the several parts of your distinction. What is the meaning of *Real Trinitarians*? But let me beg of you to answer plainly and directly.

## 18      *A Conference between an*

*Socin.* I will answer in the very words of the Author of the Discourse concerning them. He says, pag. 7. *The Realists are denominated from their believing Three distinct Divine Spirits or Minds, who are so many Real subsisting Persons.* Again p. 19. *They are every day Challeng'd and impeach'd of Tritheism.* And again p. 25. *Themselves do sometimes almost openly and explicitly own and profess their Tritheism.* Their doctrine of the Trinity manifestly implies Three Gods.

*Orthod.* What is the meaning of *Nominal Trinitarians*?

*Socin.* They are they who maintain a Trinity which Consists only in the several Names, Offices, Relations and Modes of Existence of the Divine Nature. This was first taught by Noëtus and Sabellius; embrac'd afterwards by the assertors of the *Homoousios*, and receiv'd by the Schools and Divinity Chairs ever since. This is the substance of what he says of the *Nominals* in the first part of the Discourse.

*Orthod.* And this you make the Foundation of that difference which you imagine to be in the Church, and has of late fill'd up all your Prints.

*Socin.* Yes indeed, and with a great deal of Reason. You are all afraid of the distinction. It is of your side so notorious a giving up of the Cause, that we have parted with all our Old Arguments, and retrench'd our selves there, as in a place from whence we cannot be driven.

*Orthod.* Then pray, set your heart at rest, and suffer your selves to be forc'd from it. For I presume positively to averr that there is no such thing

## Orth. Christian and a Socinian. 19

thing in nature as these *Trinitarians* of your own making. You pretended already to a God of your own making: You wish'd for a Scripture of your own making: To make a *Trinity* too, is a little too hard. I say then, and pray forgive the sharpness of the words, that all this is a mistake, a slander, and a calumny upon the Church.

*Socin.* How much must you abate of your assurance, when I shew you in several late Writings, that the Three Persons of the *Trinity*, are Three distinct Infinite Minds, Spirits, and Substances? I appeal to your self, whether this is not manifest *Tritheism*. For what is God, but an Infinite Mind, Spirit, or Substance?

*Orthod.* I have told you already, and tell you again, that such expressions are wholly unknown to the Church; and therefore cannot with any candor be fastn'd upon it. Oblige me so far as to shew me a Church in the World this day, or formerly, which uses them; or else be pleas'd to own that you are guilty of a great deal of dissingenuity.

But though such a denial is sufficient, because it is of a thing which you cannot, and dare not undertake to prove; yet it will be much clearer, if you give your self the trouble to consider, that such a notion in the Christian Church is impossible, and has not the least ground or appearance of truth. You are acquainted with the Sacred Writings of the New Testament, and no-doubt have inform'd your self, of the Confessions of Faith, of the Ancient Councils, the assertions of the generality of the Fathers, the doctrine of the Schoolmen,

the sense of the *Greek* and *Latin* Church, even since the fatal separation; and in the division of so many Kingdoms, from the last in these two Ages, you know perfectly all the Articles which the Famous Societies of Protestants have declar'd to be the points of their belief. This suppos'd, I lay before you these plain and easy, but Substantial Observations.

*First*, That the Church of God, has always asserted the *Unity* of the Divine Nature as the Foundation of all Religion. It has been its great and distinguishing Character. You will tell me that the Philosophers did so too; and that the *Jews* were witnesses to all the World of this Sacred Truth. I grant it. The Unity of God was the Fundamental Article of the *Mosaical* dispensation. *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, *Plato*, *Aristotle*, the *Academicks*, have spoke admirably well to it. But I say that *Christianity* has been as far superior to them in this point, as they themselves exceed'd the rest of Mortals. For the *Jews* kept this to themselves, without propagating it to others; and the wise Heathen confuting their doctrine by their practice, openly embrac'd *Polytheism*. None treated of God and his Divine Attributes, of which the *Unity* is the Center, as the Holy *Jesus* and his disciples have done. This the Apostles spread through the World: This the Fathers taught indefatigably. *One God, One Divine Nature, Spirit, Mind, substance* has been the constant Voice of the Church. He is not a *Christian* who believes not that God is one, and can be but one. If it were not too tedious I would produce some of their Authorities.

*Socin.*

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*Socin.* It is altogether needless. This is our very Doctrine. I am fully perswaded of this, and infinitely pleas'd to hear you speak so home to it.

*Orthod.* I am afraid you will not be so well pleas'd with my second observation, and it is this. That the same Church of God, which so Zealously asserted his *Unity*, never did it without asserting at the same time a *Trinity* of Persons in that *One* Divine Nature. No matter of fact which depends from Testimony, can be made to appear more incontestably true than this. You have a large Collection of Books at home. Let us step to your Library, and I dare engage to convince you of this by the most exact induction of particulars, which can ever be made from the very *Apostolical* Creed to this time.

I say once more, and presume to be positive in it, that the Church in delivering the Faith, ever taught the Existence of God to be necessary and Eternal, and his *Unity* so perfect and entire, that it transcends what notion soever we have of *Unity*; even that which we call *Numerical* coming much short of it: But at the same time she taught and profess'd to believe and adore in that *Unity* of Nature a *Trinity* of *Hypostases* or Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Thus run the *Apostolical*, the *Nicene*, *Ephesine*, and *Constantinopolitan* Creeds. Thus speak the *Ante-Nicene*, *Nicene*, and *Post-Nicene* Fathers. Thus all the Learning of the Schools, and all the now Churches in the World express themselves.

*Thirdly*, But least the belief of a *Trinity* of Persons whose *Coeternity* and *Coequality* is asserted

serted should affect the *Unity* of the Divine Nature, the Church has stated it in one and the same, indivisible and inseparable, simple and uncompounded Essence. They are *Coeternal* and *Coequal*, because *Coeffential*. And they are *Coeffential* because Subsisting in that Nature which cannot be multiply'd.

It is true to say of each Person that he is God; and yet it is false to say that they are Three Gods; The *Trinity* multiplying the Persons, but the *Unity* remaining the same, that is, the greatest and most unconceivable *Unity* in the World. And therefore the Sacred Councils and the Fathers have been carefull to the utmost to distinguish the *Personality* from the Nature; as afraid of multiplying the one, as of confounding the other.

You see then that the first member of your distinction is worth nothing. The charge laid against the Church in that particular is not only false but impossible. You have attempted to divide the Church of God into two Parties. The first you have accus'd of *Tritheism*, or of teaching the belief and Worship of Three Gods: Unfortunate in this, that the very exposition of the Doctrine of the Church, the very reading of any one *Creed*, is an open confutation of what you have pretended to make us guilty of!

*Socin.* I hope you will not take it ill, If I make some remarks as well as you. *First*, I confess that the *Nicene* and following Councils, spoke as you do, and that many of the *Post-Nicene* Fathers, the Schoolmen and the present Churches agree with you in this, but I deny it of  
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the *Apostolical Creed*, which ought to have been the Form of all the rest. Where can you find there a *Trinity in Unity*? Where can you see *Coeternity*, *Coequality*, *Coeffentiality*, and all those Famous Terms which the Church perserv'd ever since? For my part I can perceive no such thing. To this Creed we stand as to a rule left us by the Apostles themselves. Suffer us to keep but that, and take you all the rest.

Secondly, I challenge the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*; we say they are strangers to your Doctrine. The Answer to Dr. Bull has made it invincibly appear. Have you taken notice how the Learned Author of that answer has discover'd the impostures of *Pseudo-Hermas*, and the pretended Epistles of *Barnabas* and *Ignatius*? What clear account he has given of the *Nazarens*, *Mineans*, and *Alogi*? And what a plain proof he has brought against your *Trinity*, and the Divinity of *Jesus Christ*, out of the Epistle of *Clement* of *Rome* to the Church of *Corinth*.

Thirdly, Admitting all your allegations to be true; A *Trinity in Unity*, Three Gods in one God, is a thing wholly unaccountable.

*Orthod.* The question between you and me, is not whether it is unaccountable or not? The question is whether those whom you call *Real Trinitarians*, have departed from the doctrine of the Unity of God, and have actually and manifestly, as you speak, own'd their *Tritheism*? The matter of Fact, and not the Reasonableness or Unreasonableness of the thing, is the Point in dispute. Your mistake is Palpable. For the *Trinity in Unity*, is not Three Gods in one God, a Lan-

guage which the Church ever abhorr'd; but Three Persons in one God, Three Substences in one Divine Nature. Pray name me one Man in the Church, even of those who have most abounded in their own sense, and spoke most loosely in the explication of our *Mysteries*, who was not as Zealous a defender of the Unity of God as yourself can be.

This is then the most unpardonable want of Candor imaginable. You call me a *Tritheist*. I deny it. You prove it, because I believe the Blessed *Trinity*. I own I do. Then you exclaim, I believe Three Gods, The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I say, No! For though the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost God, yet they are but one God. For God can be but one. The Divine Nature is incapable of Multiplication, Division, or Augmentation. You may, and will urge again that this is very unreasonable. I hope to shew you one day that it is highly Rational. But in the mean time I gain the point, and complain that you do me wrong, and are inexcusable in charging me with destroying the Unity of God.

2ly. You are positive that the Ante-Nicene Fathers asserted the *Unity*, but not the *Trinity*. I suppose you mean in our sense of a *Trinity*, or else the mistake is not pardonable. Origen and other *Ante-Nicenes* make out the Unity of God, in a Ternary of Persons, though they did not believe the Equality. Says the Author of the Answer to Dr. Bull, pag. 22. unjust in this to Origen, and the rest. I have some Remarks on that Answer which I design to make publick. What the  
Author



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Author has said concerning the Epistle of St. Barnabas, and those of the Holy Martyr Ignatius, is far from invalidating their Authority. We must have more than suspicions and bare denials to illegitimate a Book. They are certainly works of great Antiquity, and acknowledg'd to be such by the succeeding Ages.

But what must we say of a Person, of his great erudition, who pretending to answer a Book full of all the Testimonies which those early times could afford, quarrels only with two or three Authors, against whom he says nothing substantial; and is wholly silent to *Justin Martyr*, *St. Irenaeus*, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Tatianus*, *Miltiades*, *Melito*, *Dionysius of Alexandria*, *Tertullian*, *Lactantius*, &c. Is it enough to confute the *Ante-Nicene* Fathers to say as this Author, pag. 7. *That all their Glory is wholly due to the vanity of Modern Learned Men; who quote these Books, not because they value them, but because being ancient monuments known to few, and understood by fewer, he seems to be a great Learned Man, who can drop sentences out of these antique Books.* But this is mild and obliging, if compar'd with pag. 63. Where this Author, having said that *Trinitarianism* is not so much a Religion, as the Law of the *Byzantine*, or *Constantinopolitan* Emperours, stiles the then Doctors of the Church, **THE PARASITES OF THESE TIMES**, whom now in regard of their antiquity we call *Fathers*. You are not insensible how this might be taken up and expos'd? If *Hosius*, *Spiridio*, *Paphnutius*; If the *Gregories*, the *Basils*, the *Cyrils*, the *Theodorets*, the *Chrysostoms*, the *Hieroms*, the *Hilaries*,  
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the *Ambroses*, the *Austins* were the *Parasites* of their times, where shall we find any Vertue, Piety, or Learning in this World?

But I am willing to over-look those excesses, and tell you that it is a folly to wrangle with this or that passage; sometimes to inveigh against *Platonicism*, and sometimes to complain that those Writings are lost, which might have inform'd us better. To be plain, we have enough left, and from what remains of the times before the Council of *Nice*, it appears that the *Unity* of God, and the belief of a *Trinity* of Persons in that one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, was the belief of the Christian Church. The *Arrians* indeed might challenge some of the *then* Fathers, who spoke more obscurely, and were easier Misinterpreted. But *Socinianism* has not the least pretence to any. He must have forfeited all modesty who asserts it.

*Socin.* But what have you to say to the *Apostolical* Creed? Is it not an evidence beyond all other evidences?

*Orthod.* Of what?

*Socin.* Of the *Unity* of the Great God.

*Orthod.* And so are all our Creeds from the first to the last.

*Socin.* But it is an Evidence against your *Trinity*?

*Orthod.* Against that *Trinity* which you have falsely imputed to us, and that is, A *Trinity* of Gods: But not against a *Trinity* of Persons in one God. What is the first assertion of that Creed? *I believe in One God.* For you affirm that it was anciently thus read, *Ans. to Doctor Bull pag. 16.*

What

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What is the second, but an Explication of the first? This One God is the Father Almighty; His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, Three Persons in One God.

*Socin.* This is so dragg'd in, so strain'd, so unnatural, that to any unprejudic'd Person, it will visibly appear not to be the Doctrine design'd to be taught in the Creed.

*Orthod.* I am apt to think that I can substantially prove that it is. I believe the Creed to be truly *Apostolical*, notwithstanding what some learned Men have said against it; Not because it was made by the Apostles themselves, though nothing appears to the contrary, but by reason of its great Antiquity. Now when you and I dispute about the sense and design of that Creed, we have but one way to take, and that is, First to see what the Scripture teaches concerning its Articles, which indeed are no more than an *Epitome*, or Collection of the Principal Truths deliver'd by *Christ* and his Apostles. Secondly, To examine the Doctrine of the Fathers who liv'd before the Church thought it fit and necessary to make a larger Explanation of the Faith. Thirdly, To satisfy our selves of the sense which the immediately following Councils gave to that Creed in their Decrees.

All this is Highly reasonable. For if the Scripture which has taught so expressly God to be *one*, has also expressly taught the *Father* to be God, the *Son* God, and the *Holy Spirit* God, then it is plain, that the sense of the Creed is such, and no other. The Authority of that Creed, or of any Creed whatever, is from the Scripture. It cannot

not therefore be contrary to it, and that excellent Rule must be brought to that Primitive Rule from whence it is deriv'd. And alas! has not this been prov'd to you so often and so fully, that after a World of wrangling you have been driven from your new and unnatural *Criticisms*, and forc'd to shelter your selves under the weak defence of your *Philosophical* disceptations?

But if this Creed has no other sence but that which you put upon it, *The Father only God, The Son only Man, and the Holy Spirit only an Energy or Operation*; How come the Fathers of that time so openly to contradict it? I will not do again, what has been so excellently done by the Learned Dr. *Bull*, who has oblig'd the Christian Church with two Books, which indeed you may speak or discourse against, but can never substantially Answer. Has he not undeniably prov'd out of their Writings, that those Fathers believ'd the two Natures in Jesus Christ. The Divine and the Human? That they have asserted his Pre-existence, and if his Pre-existence, then his Eternity, and if his Eternity, then his Consubstantiality with the Father.

If the second part of the Creed is to be understood of *Christ* only Man, How comes *Irenæus lib. 1. advers. Hæres. c. 2.* in delivering the Belief of the *Catholick Church*, or as he speaks, of the Church all the World over, to call him *Our Lord, Our God, Our Saviour, Our King, to whom every Knee ought to bow, &c.* How comes *Tertulian*, who has deliver'd this very rule of Faith, to talk as we do of the Blessed Trinity, designedly and positively against *Praxeas*, and say, *that he is warranted*

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warranted by the *Apostle* to speak of *Christ* as of him who is *God*, blessed over all for ever? If he believ'd the Holy Spirit to be only an *Energy*, How comes he to stile him, *Tertium Numen Deitatis*, & *tertium Nomen Majestatis*, The Third Person of the Deity, The Third Name of Majesty and Power. Certainly *Novatianus* was acquainted with this Creed, and yet *Lib. de Trin. c. 13.* he tells you, that the *Scriptures* deliver so Manifestly *Christ* to be *God*, that several *Hereticks*, *Divinitatis ipsius magnitudine & veritate commoti*, mov'd by the greatness and truth of his Divinity, have confounded him with the Father.

But if we had no such proofs as these, there is still one which according to your late Principles you cannot oppose. I say, your late Principles, for you change every day.

*Socin.* No! You do us wrong; we are still the same.

*Orthod.* I may, at some time or other, have an occasion to prove the defection of the Outlandish *Socinians* from *Socinus*; of you from the Outlandish *Socinians*; and of your selves from your selves in your first and latest Prints. But let us not digress from the thing in dispute. The proof which I speak of is the great Council of *Nice*.

*Socin.* What? That Council which has publish'd, Establish'd, and infected the World with its infidelity. As the Answer to Dr. *Bull*, judiciously observes, pag. 25.

*Orthod.* That first *Oecumenical* Council which could not be ignorant both of the sense of the *Apostolical* Creed, and of the Fathers whom they immediately

immediately succeeded. A Council so venerable for its Antiquity, so reverenc'd for the number of Holy and Learned Men, who voted in it, so highly honour'd by the following Ages to this day! Did they know the *Apostolical* Creed, or did they not? If you say, they did not, you overthrow all that you can pretend from it. A Creed can neither be *Apostolical* or Universal which the Nicene Fathers were not acquainted with. And if they did, then your sense of it is not that of these Primitive times. For they are so far from interpreting as you do, Jesus Christ to be only Man, and the Holy Spirit to be only an *Energy*, or operation, that you know how positively, how earnestly they assert them to be *Consubstantial* to the Father. I may be mistaken, but if this way of reasoning is not plain, I don't know what can be plain.

*Socin.* But what have we to do with the Council of *Nice*, or indeed with any Council whatsoever? We have innumerable objections against that and the following Councils.

*Orthod.* I confess you speak as a *Socinian* of the first edition. Thus *Socinus* and his first Disciples answer'd to those great Authorities. Thus did your selves Write in your first Prints. The World indeed star'd at you. But however it had an air, if not of reason, at least of sincerity. But a *Socinian* of the second edition runs another way. I told you that you change every day. Pray open the Discourse concerning the *Real and Nominal Trinitarians*.

*Socin.* What then?

*Orthod.* There you may find your Condemnation

tion in that particular out of your own mouth.  
*Pag. 4.* The Author speaking of the Great *Lateran* Council observes that a doctrine is not Heresy, because rejected by a great number of Learned Men, or by a National Council; *But only when censur'd by a General Council.* The *Catholick Church* is never understood to speak but by a General Council. *pag. 5.* Is not a General Council the Highest Court of the Church? Her Canons declare the Faith, her *Anathema's* Heresy. And *pag. 16.* A General Council is the last Tribunal on earth from which there lies no appeal. *pag. 4.* He call this an *Incontestable Argument.*

Now pray deal sincerely and apply this to the *Nicene Council.* No body ever yet disputed its universality. It was assembl'd under and by the first Christian Emperor. It represented the whole Church. The Creed then of that Council determin'd the sense of any preceeding Creed. Whatever you can say to the contrary is insignificant, because such a determination comes from the highest Tribunal on earth, from which there lies no appeal.

Upon the whole the Church ever asserted a *Trinity* consistent with the *Unity* of God, and an *Unity* inseparable from a *Trinity* of Persons in one adorable and Divine Nature. Where is then again, the first part of your Distinction? You charge us with teaching a *Trinity* which infers Three Gods. We say this is false, this is impossible, not only from the Nature of the thing, but also from an Authority which you dare not reject, because you own your selves, that it is the highest Tribunal on earth, from which there can lie no appeal.

*Socin.*

*Socin.* This seems home indeed : But yet not without exception : For the *Unity* asserted by the *Nicene* and *Post-Nicene* Fathers, was only an *Unity* of *Monarchy* : An *Unity* of love and agreement : An *Unity* of subordination, and subjection to him who is the first God. Such an *Unity* as is that of the Individuals of the same *Species*. This the Author of the Answer to Dr. Bull is positive in pag. 75. He charges the Fathers with this all over his Writing, and the greatest part of it is spent in the confutation of such strange *Hypotheses*.

*Orthod.* Pray learn to mistrust your Books. For I may say without breaking the *Cartel* of honour, and civility agreed upon amongst Writers, as this Author speaks both Pleasantly and Elegantly, pag. 77. that not one word of this is true ; and that such an account of the *Unity* of God never came from the Church, but owes its birth to the School of *Arrius*. This Author, though a Person of great erudition, has suffer'd himself to be strangely mistaken ; as any one may, who will take all the expressions, illustrations, resemblances us'd by the Fathers in treating of the Blessed Trinity, for an exact account of their Doctrine. For there is a great difference between speaking at large, and endeavouring to give some kind of a Notion of a *Mystery*, and writing dogmatically concerning it.

I have a plain reason, which I humbly conceive is sufficient to overthrow all this : And that is, that the Fathers in explaining how the Three Persons are one God, never confin'd themselves to the Terms of *Numerical* or *specifick Unity*. This last is merely Notional, and is no more than



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than an act of the Mind, comparing and abstracting from several Individuals. It does not really exist. The first though never so expressive still comes short of the incomprehensible dignity and simplicity of the Subject.

*Socin.* What *Unity* then did they assert?

*Orthod.* An *Unity* which no Nature but the Divine is capable of, which transcends all expressions or imaginations. Ἀόρατον, Ἀκατάληπτον; says the Council of *Ephesus*. ὡς ἐν ᾧ, ὡς ἐν λόγῳ; says *Justin Martyr*; Hoc solum ex ea comprehendimus, quod comprehendere non potest; says *St. Ambrose*. Thus speak *Basil the Great*, *Nazianzen*, *Gregory Nyssen*, and the generality of the Fathers. And yet this Author has spent 13 pages, to tell us that they believ'd a *specifick Unity*; an *Unity* of Monarchy and order, an *Unity* of love and agreement, a *Consubstantiality* like that of several pieces of Gold, and of a Star to another Star. As if these trifles deserv'd the name of Incomprehensible, and if we could say of any of them as *Eulogius Patriarch of Alexandria*, ἐν ἀνθρώπιναις λογισμοῖς τὰ ὡς ἐν ᾧ ὑπερέχοντες, *Not bringing those things which are so far above our thoughts to the scrutiny of human Reasonings*. Do all these *Unities* transcend the capacity of Human Nature? Are they above the reach of an inquisitive Philosopher, or a profound Divine?

*Socin.* I confess that you startle me, and I begin to have no great opinion of the first part of the distinction: I see you are no *Tritheists*, but then you must of course fall into *Nominalism* or *Sabellianism*, and that is as bad. I am afraid, that part of the charge will stick cruelly against you.

D

*Orthod.*

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*Orthod.* The notion of *Nominal Trinitarians* is, if possible, more extravagant than the other. Can you think in good earnest that the Ancient or modern Church, if such an expression may be us'd, for the Church is always the same: Can you think, I say, that the Church in the first and in these last Ages, oppos'd *Sabellianism*, with so much Zeal and Vigor, that is, that very impiety which you fasten on her, and condemn'd it, with so unanimous a consent, and yet would make it the foundation of her Faith? The vast labours of the Fathers, and of all the Doctors who succeeded them, aim'd at this, to assert a Real distinction of Persons against *Sabellius*, and their *Consubstantiality*, *Coequality* and *Coeternity* against *Arrius*. And you come resolutely to tell us, that for all that the Church is *Sabellian*, and teaches *Sabellianism*. How heartily would you laugh at a Man, who should come to tell you, that he has attentively read all the *Socinian* Prints, and finds at last that they believe the Holy Trinity and the Divinity of our Saviour?

*Socin.* Had they said so much for these two Articles as you have for *Sabellianism* in all your Books, I protest, I could not laugh at it.

*Orthod.* Let us see then what is *Sabellianism*, and if found in the Church, I promise to give up the cause. But if not, I expect that you will have the justice to own that to charge us with it, is a crying unsincerity. We cannot have the sense of *Sabellius*, better than from *Dionysius* of *Alexandria*, the other *Dionysius* of *Rome*, *Athanasius*, *St. Basil*, *Nazianzen*, *Ruffinus*, &c. You will Learn from them that *Sabellius*, own'd the  
Divine

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Divine Nature, but confounded the *Hypostases* or Persons and maintain'd one only Person, or Hypostasis the Father. And that when they objected to him the different operations of the Son, and Holy Spirit, he answer'd, that they were only denominations of the Father resulting from his several appearances, or offices to us. If you mistrust this account, take what the Author of the discourse says, pag. 16. *In a word*, says he, *the Noëtians and Sabellians held that God is but one subsisting Person, yet that with respect to things without him he may be call'd, as the modern Nominals now speak, three Relative Persons. The one subsisting Person of God sustains the three names of Father, Son, and Spirit, which being the Relations of God towards things without him, he is so many Relative Persons in a Classical Critical sense.*

Now I will do more for you than you can expect. I will not confine you to our *English* Authors. But I dare you to produce any one Man in the Church of God, who ever understood those matters and spoke at this rate. But if you do not, as I am positive that you cannot, what becomes of your distinction, and with what face can it be us'd any more?

*Socin.* I will not go out of the Kingdom, no, not out of *London* for it. *Dr. South* shall be the Man. You will not deny that he understands the sense of the Church. He says himself animadvers. *ch. 8. pa. 242.* "And this I affirm to be  
"the current doctrine both of the Fathers and the  
"Schools concerning the Persons of the Blessed  
"Trinity, and the constantly receiv'd account  
"given by them of a Divine Person, so far

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“ as they pretend to explain what such a Person is.  
*Pag. 240.* He tells you, “ That the commonly  
 “ receiv’d Doctrine of the Schools concerning  
 “ the Blessed *Trinity* is this. That the Christian  
 “ Faith has laid this sure foundation, that there  
 “ is but one God. That there is no positive real  
 “ Being strictly and properly so call’d in God,  
 “ but what is God. That there can be no com-  
 “ position in the Deity with any such positive  
 “ real Being, distinct from the Deity it self. And  
 “ yet that the Church finding in Scripture menti-  
 “ on of Three to whom distinctly the Godhead  
 “ does belong, has by warrant of the same Scri-  
 “ pture, *Heb. 1. 3.* express’d these Three by  
 “ the names of Persons, and stated their Per-  
 “ sonalities upon three distinct Modes of Sub-  
 “ sistence allotted to one and the same Godhead,  
 “ and these also distinguish’d by three distinct  
 “ Relations.

Then *pag. 241.* To explain these modes of  
 Subsistence and these Relations, he tells you,  
 “ That they are neither substance nor accident.  
 “ That they are not a Being, but only the affecti-  
 “ on of a Being, and that they add no entity to  
 “ it, such as are dependance, mutability, presence,  
 “ absence, &c. And that they have no Existence  
 “ of their own after a separation, or division from  
 “ the things or beings to which they do belong.

Having thus in general explain’d what a mode  
 is, he applys it, *pag. 242.* And says that the  
 Personalities by which the *Deity* stands Diver-  
 sify’d into three distinct Persons are call’d and  
 accounted Modes . . . . That every Person is  
 properly the Godhead as subsisting with and un-  
 der such a certain Mode or Relation.      Now

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Now put all this together, and see whether this is not the very Doctrine of *Sabellius*. Did not *Sabellius* say, that God is one, even the Father acting under several Names, sustaining several Relations, by which he sometimes is the Father, and sometimes the Son? What does Dr. *South* say more? He must be very clear sighted who can perceive any difference between these two *Hypotheses*.

*Orthod.* There is as much difference as between affirming and denying; between Light and Darkness. *Sabellius* admits only *one* Person in the Divine Nature; Dr. *South* Three. When *Sabellius* by the great evidence of Scripture is forc'd to own Three Persons, and confess the Relations, He will have them to be Persons *only in a Classical Critical sence*, having no other but a *Metaphorical* being. He confounds the Persons, and makes the Son and the Holy Spirit to be the Father.

Dr. *South* affirms them to be Persons in a Real Sence, by an *Eternal Communication of the Divine Nature*, and so really distinct, that the Son cannot be the Father; or the Holy Spirit, Father or Son; or the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit.

*Sabellius* makes the Relations to be wholly *extrinsecal*, as he sustains the Three Names of Father, Son, and Spirit, *which being the Relations of God towards things without him, he is so many Relative Persons*.

Dr. *South* affirms pag. 242. the Relations to be *Intrinsecal*, founded upon those Internal Acts by which one Person produces another, or proceeds from another. He tells you, that God may sustain an extrinsecal Relation founded upon

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some external act issuing from him, as *Creation, Preservation, &c.* Which adds to the Deity only an *extrinsecal* denomination, as of *Creator, Preserver, &c.* But that this leaves an *Internal incommunicable Character essentially inseparable from the Deity.* That it may be said, that God might never have been a Creator: But that it cannot be said that he might never have been a Father; the former being only an effect of his will, but this latter the necessary result of his Nature. This you have, pag. 243.

But that which sinks for ever this miserable imputation of *Sabellianism* or *Nominalism*, call it which you please, is the noble Principle which this Learned and worthy Man has laid down. *Animadv.* p. 245. in which as in the rest he has truly spoke the sense of the Church.

“ Upon the whole matter, in discoursing of  
“ the *Trinity*, two things are absolutely necessary  
“ to be held and insisted upon. One, that each and  
“ every Person of the Blessed *Trinity* entirely  
“ contains and includes in himself the whole  
“ Divine Nature. The other, that each Per-  
“ son is incommunicably different and distinct  
“ from one another.

I thought you look'd dissatisfy'd when speaking of this famous distinction of *Realists* and *Nominals*, I us'd the words of slander, calumny, disingenuity; Let me now beg of you to give it a name.

*Socin.* Truly I must be forc'd to tell you, that I saw this distinction urg'd so often, our late Prints so full of it, and honest Mr. E. valuing himself so highly upon it, that I thought it was  
more

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more solid than really it is. I will take time to consider of what you have said to it. When I have next the happiness to see you, you shall have my Thoughts of it. In the mean time . . .

*Orthod.* No: I cannot leave you yet. I must before we part, complain of another injustice which your Friends have done us.

*Socin.* What is that?

*Orthod.* That which My Lord Bishop of *Sarum* calls in his Pastoral Letter, *the heaviest of all imputations; that they submit to his Lordship's whole doctrine which differs in nothing from what the Unitarians profess'd in all their Writings.* That is to say in plain English, that he is a *Socinian*. A cruel and barbarous sort of a compliment to a *Catholick*, and an *English* Bishop! They do the same in effect to My Lord of *Worcester*, in their last Answer to his *Lordships* Book, pag. 62. To the University of *Oxford*, to Dr. *South*, whom they call in derision *Brother South*, as they had done Dr. *Wallis*, *Father Wallis*. In the Answer to My Lord of *Chichester* they speak very plain, pag. 27.

"It is, say they, by this Declaration of our  
"meaning, that all our Books, *Past*, or to come,  
"are to be interpreted. We never intend to  
"oppose any Body in the Article of the *Trinity*,  
"but the *Tritheists*, or *Realists*, who are Here-  
"ticks to the Church as well as to us, nor in the  
"Article of the Divinity of our Saviour, but the  
"Eutychians, who make the Communication of  
"Idioms to be Real, and not only Verbal, which is  
"an Heterodoxy condemn'd in divers General  
"Councils.

That word, *General Councils*, which they esteem'd so little before, is now of great value. They tell this very Bishop, "that they do not in the least suspect that he will disown the Catholic Doctrine, and be of a Party of Hereticks, who have been Condemn'd by so many General Councils."

*Socin.* Well: and where lies the injustice of all this? If the *Socinians* are become *Orthodox*, and embrace the Doctrine of the Church, is it not an honour to these Great Men to have reason'd them into this Submission? I remember that in some of our Prints, we have call'd the Bishop of *Sarum* the *Eusebius* of the Age. As the Famous *Eusebius* brought over many Bishops to the subscribing the *Homoousion*; Is it the heaviest of all imputations to his Lordship, that he has perswaded the *Socinians* out of their Errors? Must you your self take it ill, that Persons, of whom I have heard you often give a great Character, should return to the Faith and Obedience of the Church? All that I dislike in those Complements is, the *Books past*, or to come. For the *Books past*, speak no such thing, and I fear the *Books to come* will not much mend the matter.

*Orthod.* I did not expect that you would not be serious in so mighty a concern as this. I confess that it would be to me, and to all good Men, an incredible satisfaction to see an end of this Controversy. But I tell you, there is no sincerity in all this. They are no more return'd to the Sence and Faith of the Church than you are. They build still upon that foolish distinction of *Realists*, or *Trisbeists*, and *Nominals*, or *Sabellians*. The first



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first is a Monster of their own making. The other is a shelter to their *Heterodoxy*. By this they maintain a *Trinity* which is no *Trinity*, and strive to advance error under her Wing, who is the Pillar of Truth. In short; If the *Trinity* believ'd and taught by the Church is *Sabellianism*, they are your humble servants. It is that that they would cover *Socinianism* by. But how can they believe as the Church, when the doctrine which they pretend to return to, is that to which the Church is irreconcilable?

*Socin.* How must they do then to convince you that they sincerely desire a peace and are come over to you?

*Orthod.* By writing with that respect which is due to Bishops of whom in the Answer to Mr. Edwards, pag. 13. they own the institution to be of Divine right. Let them receive the *Catholick Creeds*, that of the Great *Athanasius*, the *Doxology*, and the Articles of the Church of *England*. Then and not before I will believe that they are sincere.

*Socin.* These are large strides. I am not for running so fast. Suffer me to take my leave of you. I will think on what we have discours'd, and then you shall hear from me. Adieu.

The

## The Second DIALOGUE.

*Orthod.* I had promis'd my self the happiness of seeing you before this.

*Socin.* Truly I design'd it, but was resolv'd not to do it, till I had been as good as my word; that is, till I had consider'd what we discours'd of some days since. For whatever you may think of me I have a sense of Religion. I am fully convinc'd, that there is a God to whom I owe all my service, and a future state of happiness and misery, on which I cannot reflect without a mighty concern. I am not so much an enemy to my own interest as to cheat my self of the one; and willfully to fall into the other.

*Orthod.* What is the result then of your consideration?

*Socin.* To speak sincerely my Thoughts, I am come off from the distinction of Real and Nominal *Trinitarians*; and do you the justice to own that it appears to me to be ill grounded. Though I believe at the same time that he who first invented it, did it, *bona fide*; and had the occasion given him by the inadvertency of your own Writers. But there are still two difficulties in my way which I cannot overcome. I would not be thought to suspect your Learning, or Candor; But I am afraid you cannot resolve them.

The

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The first is this. If you are neither for a Real, nor a Nominal *Trinity*; then you are for no *Trinity* at all. For there is no *medium* between them. The second is, that in what sense soever you hold a *Trinity*, I cannot believe it. A *Trinity* of Persons of which every one is God, and yet but one God, is to me the most absurd notion in the World. I have study'd the matter with as much application as I can. But to me it still appears to be a perpetual affront to Reason, and good sense.

*Orthod.* Give me leave to tell you that the first is no difficulty at all. The Church believes a Real *Trinity*; Not in that sense of *Real*, which your Friends have made so much noise about, and so unjustly imputed to us, which infers three Gods; But in that sense which in the asserting three Divine Persons, preserves still the Unity of the Divine Nature. To speak plainly, and prevent that wrangling to which obscurity generally leads Men; what the Church proposes to our belief consists in this.

The Unity of God is so clearly prov'd both by Reason, and the Authority of the Sacred Writings, that there is not in the World a truer, or a plainer assertion than this. *God is one, and can be but one.* But the same Sacred Writings speaking of the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Spirit*, and giving those Characters of them by which they appear incommunicably distinct from one another; It makes this second assertion. *The Father is not the Son, or the Holy Spirit. Nor the Son the Father, or the Holy Spirit. Nor the Holy Spirit, Father, or Son.* But the Scripture being  
express

express and positive in giving to every one of these Persons the Name, Nature, Attributes, and Operations of God, there arises a third assertion. *The Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God.* But the first of these propositions standing unmoveable, and God ceasing to be, if he ceases to be one; All at last are resolv'd into this Fourth; That in that *O N E* adorable and Divine Nature are Father, Son and Holy Spirit, every one God, and yet but *O N E* God.

This is the Real Trinity which the Church believes; which the Apostles have taught; For which the Martyrs dy'd; and notwithstanding all the oppositions of *Hereticks* has obtain'd, and will obtain to the end of the World. I cannot read the Ecclesiastical History, but I adore the veracity of *Christ*, and see in that very particular the fullfilling of his promise to the Church, that *the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against Her.*

Your second difficulty is as easily resolv'd as the first. For how can that be an affront to Reason and good Sense, which God has commanded us to believe?

*Socin.* There must be a great deal more in it, than what you have laid down. Vast many Books have been written on this Subject. You are not ignorant how from the first and intermediate ages of *Christianity* to this time, it has been the ground of irreconcilable disputes. I do not speak only when the Emperours espous'd the Cause, and this or that Opinion prevail'd, because it was the Religion of the Court: But I speak of the retirements of the Schools, where the dispute was furious; and the Doctors more set  
one

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one against another, than *Marius* and *Sylla*, *Cæsar* and *Pompey*. This grand and Mysterious Contradiction, has given birth to infinite Contradictions, which like the *Hydra's* head, multiply daily without number. The *Socinians* in that Print of theirs, call'd *A Letter of Resolution concerning the Doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation*, pag. 10. have charg'd this home upon you. "The Author tells you foundly, that there is no "fewer than fifteen divisions amongst you; each "division consisting of two Parties at the least, "some of them of four or five. So that they "are in all, about forty Parties of them. A strong Argument by the way against the pretended *Unity* of the Church!

*Orthod.* What I have propos'd to you, is the simplicity of the Revelation. God has reveal'd so much, and in that there is enough to satisfy our selves. The dissingenuity of the Author of that Letter appears in this, that he talks of divisions and Parties, and pretends to enumerate them; whereas there never was any about this.

*Socin.* Can you think that a Learned Person, as this Author is, durst have the confidence to assure such a thing, if he had not very good grounds for it?

*Orthod.* Call it what you please: I dare to averr that he has none at all. But to make this clear, I must needs tell you, that in a Revelation two things are to be consider'd. The one is the thing reveal'd; as in this case, *the Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Spirit God, and yet not three, but one God.* The other is the manner how these things are, which are reveal'd? How the  
Father

Father is a Father, how the Son is a Son, how the Holy Spirit proceeds from Father and Son? How every one of these is God, and yet but one God? I dare say that there has not been, nor can never be a more universal agreement than there has been in the first. Had we been contented to adore and believe, there had never been any Schisms or Divisions in that particular. But Man will be curious, pretend to unfold *Mysteries*, and clearly see into his Nature, *who has made darkness his Pavilion round about him*. He must of course receive the punishment due to his Presumption, and instead of that noble pleasure which results from knowing, meet with all the sad consequences of a confident ignorance.

Any one moderately acquainted with Ecclesiastical Learning, will see that this has been the conduct of the Church, to stick to that first part as certain and undoubted, and not at all to meddle with the other as full of danger. This is visible in all the confessions of Faith of the Primitive Councils, which are full in asserting the *Unity* of God, and the *Trinity* of Persons, and all upon the certainty of the Divine Revelation: But pretend to no kind of explication of the *H O W*, or manner of it.

I confess that private Doctors have done it, and that with heats not becoming the matter in dispute. The Schools have given way to a World of impertinent questions, and have been as impertinent in their resolutions as impertinence can be. They have commented upon one another, and still the Commentary has been obscurer than the Text. But when all is done, they

they have stuck firmly to the doctrine reveal'd, and unanimously agreed in this, though they disagreed in there explications about it.

I should look upon it as the greatest Miracle that ever was done, if they had explain'd that which is inexplicable. Is there no such thing as the Heavens, because some Philosophers have maintain'd that they were Fluid, and others that they were Solid bodies? Is there no such thing as the Earth, because that sort of Men have wrangl'd about its figure and motion? The same may be ask'd of Form and Matter, and indeed of all the Phænomena's of Nature, concerning which Authors have given us some good and solid Reasons, others nothing but fanlies and dreams. This is the great weakness of *Socinianism*. The Gentlemen of that perswasion reject a most important Truth, in which all Christians but themselves agree, because they cannot understand the manner of it. *We cannot tell*, say they, *how it is, therefore it is not*. And they pretend to argue strongly when they affirm that there are divisions and subdivisions amongst us about it: Whereas there is really none but in the explication, our assent to the truth of the thing being firm and unmoveable. We said something of this Nature the other Day, but you have taken no notice of it.

*Socin.* This fine Discourse is all a grand mistake. We do not reject the *Trinity* because we understand it not; but because we understand it. We let the *HOW*, or manner alone. 'Tis the thing it self which we exclaim against. You worship you know not what. Did you give your selves  
leisure

leisure to think, and not thwart the very first impressions of a Rational Soul, this very grand contradiction would stare you in the Face. *Three that are but one!* What need is there here of Reasoning? Three Persons every one God, and all but one God! May not I tell you what *Tertullian* says in another case, *Advoco te, O Anima, naturaliter philosophantem, non qualis erudita es in Philosophorum Scholis, &c.* I appeal to thee, O Soul, not such as thou hast been taught in the Schools of Philosophers, but with those impressions which Nature has given thee! Are one, and one, and one, Three, or is it but one?

*Orthod.* Your citing of *Tertullian* puts me in mind of a passage of *Boëtius* brought in by the Bishop of *Worcester* in his vindication of this very doctrine, pag. 65. The Catholick Doctrine of the *Trinity* is this, says *Boëtius*, the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, but they are not Three Gods but one God. And yet the Bishop pleasantly observes, that the *Socinians* may wonder at it; this very Man having written a Learned Book of *Arithmetick*. And so for all this eloquent exclamation of *Tertullian*, that Father was a Zealous assertor of the *Trinity*, that is, of one, and one, and one not being three, but one. So were a World of Learned Men in those days, who though cultivated by a Philosophical institution, had not yet for all that taken their leave of the first impressions of Nature. But to come to the point.

If the difference between us were of numbers, or of any created substance, I would cry out contradiction as loud as your self. I would call  
the



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the first Man that I see in the street, and pray him only to tell. But this is quite of another Nature. It has no foundation on any thing that we know. The question is of the Nature of God, between whom and us there is an infinite disproportion. We cannot Reason of him, from any thing which we find in our selves, or in our fellow Creatures. God is so far above our small and weak perceptions, that except he is pleas'd to acquaint us himself what he is; We must remain in our ignorance. If God then tells us that he is one and Three; If what we say of him, is that which he has said of himself; Must we presume to talk, or so much as to imagine any contradiction in it?

*Socin.* I admire your prudence, but I cannot commend your sincerity. You are sensible on what rocks they split, who pretended to prove the *Trinity* not contrary to Reason. I think that the B. of G. Dr. S. Mr. H. and others have sufficiently smarted for it. I will engage for them, that they will return no more to such kind of ratiocinations. You take another way, and resolve all into God's Authority. I grant that what God says must be true. Nothing is true but according to that conformity which it has to the mind of God. But God has said no such thing of himself that he is one and Three. *Trinus & unus.* I deny that he has.

*Orthod.* King Agrippa believ'st thou the Prophets? May not I ask you, do you believe the Scriptures. It is in that Sacred Book that God speaks to us. It is there that he asserts it.

*Socin.* I believe the Scriptures to be the  
E
Word

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Word of God, and as we have said in the brief Notes on the *Atbanasian Creed*, a *Divine*, an *infallible*, and compleat rule both of Faith and manners. But I deny that there is any such thing in the Scripture.

*Orthod.* I am glad to hear you speak so justly and so reverently of the Sacred Writings, which part will you have me to prove? The Unity of the *Godhead*, or the *Trinity* of Persons in that one Divine Nature.

*Socin.* You may spare your trouble in proving the first. We are the great Assertors of it. It is from thence that we take the name of *Unitarians*; Though you are obstinately bent to call us *Socinians*.

*Orthod.* Your assuming that name is an invasion of the rights of all Christians. Nay it is an affront to all the wise and sober part of Mankind. You call your selves *Unitarians*, just as the *Donatists* in a poor little corner of *Africa* call'd themselves the *Catholick Church*. Will you then have me to prove that in the Scripture the Father is call'd God, the Son God, and the Holy Spirit God?

*Socin.* You may spare your self that trouble too. I know all the places that you can alledge. You have repeated them a hundred, and a hundred times. If you call this a proof, any thing in the World may be a proof.

*Orthod.* Pray let me lay them before you, and let us fairly see what exceptions you have against them. It is not Candid, no, it is not civil, to tell an Adversary that you know all that he has to say to you.

*Socin.* I may take the Liberty to be positive in that

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that particular. I have an answer ready which I am sure you cannot take ill. I am sensible that you will produce several Texts; but as it has been urg'd again and again by us, and in particular against Mr. *Luzancy*, in the Answer to his four Letters, pag. 42. "They are Texts clogg'd with abundance of uncertainties. 'Tis deny'd with great vehemence, by the ablest Criticks of the *Trinitarian* Perswasion, that some of these Texts were originally so read as they are now Publish'd in our common Bibles; Nay, some of them were not read at all in any Bible till five or six hundred years after the Decease of the Apostles, and other Sacred Penmen. But whether anciently read, or thus read, yea, or no; there is none of them, but is more fairly capable of a sence consistent with the *Unity* of God, as 'tis taught by the *Unitarians* and *Nominals*, and is actually so interpreted by divers of the most allow'd and celebrated Interpreters of the Church. Who sees not here that to introduce and believe *Monstrosities* on such a craz'd foundation as this, is to give up common sence without a tolerable cause for it? Whereas indeed there can be no cause so great as may induce us to part with it. 'Tis to admit and defend contradictions, and that in a capital Article of Religion when we need not. 'Tis to Sacrifice the clearest and most important dictates of Reason, not to any necessity, but to our secular interests, or wantonness: And has not the Author of the Letter of *Resolution* told you plainly, that you have given up all your places of strength?

*Orthod.* There is in what you have said, Declaration

clamation and Argument. "To introduce and  
 "believe *Monstrosities* on such a craz'd founda-  
 "tion: To give up common Sense without a  
 "tolerable cause for it: To admit and defend  
 "contradictions, and that in a Capital Article:  
 "To sacrifice the clearest and most important  
 "Dictates of Reason to our secular interests, or  
 "wantonness. All this is Declamation. That  
 sort of Imbellishments are very rude and severe.  
 As if Conscience were all of the *Socinian*, and  
 none of the Church's side. I know how you  
 would exclaim, if we talk'd to you at this rate.  
 The rest seems to be Argument. But in this I  
 must confess, that I admire at your vehemency,  
 as you call it, when there is not a single word  
 of Truth in the Allegation.

Forgive me if I say that it is false, that those  
 Texts are clogg'd with abundance of uncertain-  
 ties. The Form of our Baptism in the name of the  
 Holy and Blessed *Trinity* is clear, Genuine, Au-  
 thentick; and so far from being clogg'd with  
 uncertainties, that all the Fathers, all the School-  
 men, all the Modern Interpreters have acknow-  
 ledg'd it. I wonder what you mean by the  
 ablest *Criticks* of the Trinitarian Perswasion.  
 This is perpetually in your Writings. But you  
 are very careful not to name any of them, and  
 I commend you for it. I would beg it as a favour  
 of you that in your next Print, you would name  
 some of these ablest *Criticks*, and shew us what  
 \*uncertainties they have found those Texts  
 charg'd with. I am satisfy'd that if it had not  
 been for *Hugo Grotius*, and one or two more,  
 whom you have sadly misrepresented, your  
 cause

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cause must have starv'd for want of such Authorities as these.

It is false again, that the substantial Text which we alledge to prove the Divinity of the *Son*, and *Holy Spirit*, were read at any time otherwise than they are now. You say that some of them were not read at all, till 5, or 600 years after the decease of the Apostles. This has as little Truth as the rest. There is but one and no more which you have pretended to dispute, and that is, 1 *Joh.* 5. 7. and you cannot but know that it has been cited by St. *Cyprian*, and is in the famous Edition of the Bishop of *Oxford*, whom Father *Simons*, though of another communion, calls deservedly, the Learned Bishop of *Oxford*. It was in that of *Pamelius*. It is to be found in the Catalogue of the Texts, cited by the Great *Athanasius*, and Printed in the latest Edition of that Father. It had been us'd before by *Tertullian* against *Praxeas*. And both St. *Ambrose*, and St. *Hierom* complain'd that the *Arrians* had ras'd this Text out of all the Copies which they could come at. The last part of the verse, *and these Three are One*, not being capable of the petit novel interpretation of their agreeing in one, but being look'd upon by the Ancients who were more sincere in their disputes than we are, as a direct proof of the consubstantiality of the Divine Persons.

You say that there is none of them but what is more fairly capable of a sense consistent with the Unity of God as is taught by the *Unitarians* and *Nominals*. I have convinc'd you already that there is no such thing in the Catholick Church as *Nominals*.

*nal Trinitarians* : and the exception is needless ; since we maintain with all Christians that the *Trinity* of Persons is no contradiction to the Unity of the Divine Nature.

*Socin.* But supposing your Texts to be true ; they are still contested Texts. They are not so clear as to be capable but of one sense. You give them one, and I give them another. Perhaps they may admit of a third. Thus you build demonstrations on things really very uncertain. Then you thunder in our Ears *Scripture, Scripture*, whereas at the bottom you say nothing, by using Texts capable of different senses. I commend you for resolving this great controversy into the Authority of the Sacred Writings ; but then as it has been said to Mr. *Luzancy*, pag 42. *The Revelation for it ought to be most clear : so clear that a fair and ingenuous Reasoner will not contest the positiveness and evidence of the Revelation.* You understand a Text your way, and I do it mine, and so there is an end of your Method.

*Orthod.* You will not name us those ablest Criticks, of whom you speak so much in your Writings. You keep them in the dark as the *Deus in Machina* of the old *Heathens*, that their sudden appearing may the more surprize. But I fear you are one of them, you come at once to impeach the Christian World, and tell this present age and those that are past, that the Texts us'd by them may be true, but they are contested and so worth nothing. Is the contesting then of a Text enough to have it rejected ? Is my sense oppos'd to the sense universally receiv'd by the Church of God enough to turn that sense out of Doors.

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Doors. Whither will this wild way of arguing hurry a Man? Do you perceive the consequences of such a Principle? By this an *Atheist*, a *Deist*, or any Heretick in the World is secure. It is but giving another sense to a proposition than what it naturally has. And when you argue with never so much clearness from Authority, he will tell you, there is no proposition in the World but what is capable of several senses. What you say may be true: But it is contested, and I contest it. This is your sense of the thing, but it is not mine.

*Socin.* You both mistake and misrepresent me. I have no such thoughts. By contestation, I mean such an opposition as is well grounded. It is not enough to say, 'tis not my sense; but I must have substantial Reasons to say so. I demand, as I have told you already, *a Text so clear, that a fair and an ingenuous Reasoner will not contest the positiveness of the Revelation.*

*Orthod.* That is, you demand no Text at all. For whosoever will contradict it, will think himself a fair Reasoner. Do not all the *Socinians* believe that they are the fairest Reasoners in the World. Are they not cry'd up by their party for Men of mighty Reason. Your self are persuaded that you are a fair and ingenuous Reasoner. Those lilly *Criticisms* which you have obtruded upon all the Texts of Scripture are look'd upon by you, as great efforts of Reason. So that this can be no rule at all, but is a shameful begging of the Question. Every Contester will call himself a fair Reasoner.

*Socin.* What! Is there no such thing then as

fair reasoning? Is there not in Men an equitable disposition to judge of, and assent to the Truth?

*Orthod.* Yes certainly; but you have it not. There are vast many Texts produc'd to assert the Divinity of the Son and Holy Spirit. For we do not only alledge one or two solitary places of Scripture. But we maintain also this to be the Foundation of Christianity, and taught in the Scriptures, *Plainly, Frequently, Irrefragably.* Which is the way to reason fairly in this case?

*First,* It is to see the sense which offers it self in the Texts which we produce. Give me leave to bring in an instance or two, *Rom. 9. 5. St. Paul* speaking of Christ, says that *he is over all, God blessed for ever.* The natural sence of the proposition is, that he is truly God. *Over all,* and *Blessed for ever,* being the Notion which we have of an Eternal Being. You cannot without an incredible violence make any other sence of that proposition. The same is *Phil. 2. 6. Who being in the Form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God.* That which the proposition naturally offers is that *Christ is God.* None but a King can say that he thinks it not robbery to be equal with a King. None but he who is God can pretend an equality with God.

*Secondly,* I must see whether that sence which offers it self so naturally to me, has the same effect on other People. It is a mighty confirmation to me that I take a proposition right, when the wise, the good, the inquisitive part of Mankind takes it as I do. Now our Texts have not only the advantage of a natural evidence; but they have also another, and that is the consent  
of



of the Christian Church. The Church of God has spoke as we speak, understood as we understand, believ'd as we believe. It is the Voice of the Sacred Councils in their Decisions, of the Fathers in their Writings, of the Universities in their Chairs, and of all Christians in their Praises, Prayers, and Adorations.

You own'd it to me, and you said that it was the sence of the *Socinians*, that *the Scripture is an Infallible, Divine, and Compleat rule of Faith, and Manners*. But it can never be so, if there is not an universal sence in those propositions in which the Faith is deliver'd. For to whom is it a rule? even to all Christians. And how can Christians follow this rule if there is not a common sence in which they may be united? But what is that sence, but that which appears to the Church in the propositions, and become the sence of the Church? A sence of so much the more weight and Authority, because no Scripture is of private interpretation. This with all Men who pretend to any acquaintance in those Matters, is *fair and ingenuous Reasoning*.

*Socin*. I thank'd you once for an Argument in the behalf of *Transubstantiation*, and now I do it for *Tradition*. The denial of it is a Protestant Principle.

*Orthod*. You are so press'd by the evidence of what I offer'd, that because you cannot answer, you would endeavour to divert it. Know then by the way, that Protestants deny, and that on very good grounds, *Tradition* to be the last and supreme judge of Controversies; But maintain *Tradition* and particularly so Universal and uncontested

contested as it is in this particular, to be the greatest humane evidence in the World. The unanimous consent of the Church in a point of Faith is not to be oppos'd by any sober *Christian*.

But to return. Let us see what is *your fair and ingenuous way of reasoning*? You are so far from the method propos'd by me, that you reject the natural sence of the Texts. Some, you must give me leave to say it, you have openly falsify'd. As for instance, *Rom. 9. 5.* You will not have it, *God Blessed*, but, *God be blessed for ever*, against the Faith of all Copies, against the Authority of all Writers. Some you have loaded with little *Criticisms*, as *Phil. 2. 6.* Upon others you have trump't new, unnatural, and incoherent explications, as *Job. 1. 1.* And followed Dreams of Yesterday, unknown to the Church of God, or to any one Writer in it. Others you have eluded with poor *Allegories*, as *Col. 1. 16.* In a word, there is scarce a part of Scripture but what you have put to the Rack; and then you come to tell us of *fair and ingenuous reasonings*, of your elaborate Prints to prove the Unity of God, which no Christian ever deny'd. The *Trinity* of the Divine Persons appears so visibly in the Sacred Writings; that if you design to deal as a fair or ingenuous reasoner, you must either embrace the doctrine, or reject their Authority.

*Socin.* I will do neither, I am perswaded of the truth of the one, but not at all of the other. Observe what the ingenious Author of the Answer to Mr. *Luzancy* has said to him, pag. 44, 45, 46. I will put it in as few words as I can, and yet I hope without losing any thing of

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of the force of the Argument. " You charge that  
" upon the Scripture, which is no Scripture at all,  
" and you oblige us to believe as the word of  
" God, that which is no word of God ; but only  
" your inferences from it. You draw conclusi-  
" ons, those conclusions you rest in, and though  
" they are no Articles of Faith, because only  
" the work of your reason, yet you propose  
" them as Faith to us. I would fain ask whether  
" your reason is more infallible than ours :  
" Or whether you have a privilege which we  
" have not of making inferences ? The *Tri-*  
" *nity* is no doctrine of Scripture but only an  
" inference from it. May not I have the Liber-  
" ty either to make a contrary inference to yours,  
" or to review your deductions ; to judge the  
" consistency or contradiction of these inferences.  
" I honour the Scripture, but I am not oblig'd  
" to receive your Argumentations ? These are  
not indeed his words, but I am sure it is his sense.  
Get out of this as well as you can.

*Orth.* But pray what is all this to the purpose?  
Is an assent due to a plain and express proposition  
an inference ? Or if you will call it an inference,  
is it not the natural result of that plain proposi-  
tion ? and must not whosoever has any share of  
understanding give the same assent to it which I  
do. What are all our perceptions but infe-  
rences, and all our talk and conversation but con-  
clusions ? The Plow-Man does it as much as the  
Philosopher ; and there are propositions of that  
evidence, that if offer'd to all Mankind ; all  
Mankind will agree in them. The question  
is not here between your Reason and mine. Nor  
do

do I pretend to more infallibility than you in reasoning. But I say that Reason is so much the same in you and me, that a plain and express proposition being offer'd us, you and I must equally assent to it. If you do not, you wrong Reason, and are unjust to it.

I confess that when that which is propos'd is obscure, intricate, and capable of several senses; the conclusions may be different, and I cannot without injustice deny, that you should examine the consistency, or contradiction of my deductions. But I maintain that most of the propositions by which our Holy Faith is establish'd, are of such plainness that no equitable Man can fix any other sense upon them, than what they offer themselves. That I may not give you any occasion of mistaking me, for your Friends are admirable at this, and if they can but lay hold on it, they presently expatiate and lose the question: I mean no more than as to the existence of the Revelation, that is, that there is such a thing reveal'd, though not as to the manner of the thing, the H O W it is in it self.

Not to multiply instances, take the places already cited, *Rom. 9. 5. Whose are the Fathers, and of whom as concerning the Flesh CHRIST came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.* What is that which the proposition offers? That CHRIST is a Man descended from the Fathers, and that he is God over all, God blessed for ever. It is a plain, and as plain a proposition as can be. But when I go further and say; Then there are two Natures in *Christ Jesus*; for as a Man he cannot be God; and as God he cannot

not be Man : He is Man because *concerning the Flesh he came from the Father* ; He is God, because the Apostle says he is *over all, God blessed for ever* : I confess that this is an Inference ; but it is an inference which results so plainly and so fully from the Nature of the proposition, that it is as clear and as undeniable as the proposition it self. Again *Phil. 2. 6. Who being in the Form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.* There is a plain proposition that CHRIST is equal with God : and the inference is of the same nature and clearness as the proposition. Therefore he must be God. For none but God can be equal with God.

1 Cor. 2. 10. *The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.* The Spirit knows all that God is, his Nature, his Perfections, even those depths unfathomable to any created Being. You will not quarrel with the proposition, and can you quarrel with the inference, which in effect is the same with the proposition, and that is, that he is God, since none but God perfectly knows himself ? Pray what inference is there in *Act. 5. 3, 4* when *Peter* in his Apostolical Zeal asks *Ananias* why *Satan* has fill'd his Heart to lye to the Holy Ghost ? *Thou hast not ly'd unto Men, but unto God.* If the Holy Ghost is not God, how could he lye unto God ? You see the inference is drawn by *St. Peter* himself, and lies in the very Heart of the Proposition.

How unreasonable is this noise about inferences will appear if you take notice of the beginning of *St. John's Gospel.* Is Verse the 14th an Inference ? *The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten*

## 62      *A Conference between an*

*begotten Son of the Father, full of Grace and Truth. Are the 1, 2, 3. Verses an Inference? The Word was with God, The Word was God, The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him there was not any thing made that was made. Is Job. 20. 28. an Inference? And Thomas answer'd and said unto him, my Lord, and my God! Let us deal candidly; if you call the Incarnation and the Union of the two Natures in CHRIST JESUS an Inference; Is it not the plainest result of the plainest Propositions that ever were in the World.*

*Socin.* You are launch'd into a vast Sea of Discourse.

*Orthod.* Oblige me so far as to suffer me to insist somewhat longer on this, and I will repay your Patience with a serious attention to what you have to say to it. Read 1 Job. 5. 7. *There are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these Three are One.* When we talk of a Trinity of Persons consistent with the Unity of the Divine Nature, is it an Inference or is it not? Is not the Trinity of Persons, and the Unity of the Godhead clearly express'd in the Proposition? You have made such a wonder at the word *Trinity*, and been so rude as to call *Trinity* in Unity *Jargon*, *Contradiction*, *Nonsense*. How can you reconcile all this with this noble Passage? Is not this a *Trinity* in Unity, not by way of Inference, but by a full and plain Assertion?

But why should I be so earnest to prove this against the *Socinians*, when they themselves cannot deny it? For if our Doctrine consists in nothing but inferences and conclusions which we draw

draw as we please; What has made them so earnest to dispute these very texts, and with poor and little *Criticisms* to endeavour to elude their force? If these Texts had not star'd them in the face with an incontestable evidence, what should make them so indefatigable in granting and denying, adding Comma's, changing or putting in particles, as if Truth wanted such mean helps?

It sh<sup>o</sup>ws there are two sorts of inferences, the one near and immediate, such as I have given you some instances of, which naturally flow from the thing propos'd and are of equal clearness with it. The other remote and not appearing so easily at first, but wanting the help of further inquiries and deductions. Concerning the first I may challenge your Reason of error. I may safely and truly say, you offer violence to Reason. I may appeal to all Mankind in the case. But for the other, I must not so freely affirm it, nor say that my Reason is more infallible than yours. When I am oblig'd to run through a long course of deductions I may mistake as much as you do.

The Church never pretended to any inferences but of the first kind. If the Scripture proposes a *Trinity* of Persons in the Unity of the *Godhead*: If it represents these Persons incommunicably distinct from one another; Their *Consubstantiality*, *Coequality*, *Coeternity*, is a natural and a necessary consequence. If it teaches me that *CHRIST* is God and Man, the Union of the two Natures in one adorable Person is an inference of the same sort. If there is a Father from ever, and a Son from ever, and if a Spirit proceeds

proceeds from ever ; *Eternal Generation* , and *Eternal Procession* are necessary deductions from those great truths , and in a manner the same with the truths themselves. I tell you once more, you must either admit our doctrine or reject the Holy Scriptures.

*Socin.* I confess that what you have said is well put together; and has a very good face; But still I am far from being satisfy'd. There is nothing can make me believe a contradiction. Let it be found in Sacred or humane Writings, it is still a contradiction. A contradiction, is that to which all the World cannot reconcile me. You say, Revelation, and a Revelation which I own to be the rule of my Faith, is for it. I say, my Reason is against it. Revelation and Reason cannot be contrary to one another. This would be a greater contradiction than the first. God cannot give me Reason in my Creation to be my guide, and unravel at the same time those very Principles which he has made a part of my constitution.

*Tertullian de pœnit. c. 1.* says truly and Elegantly, *Res Dei Ratio ; Reason is the business and work of God.* It is by it that he has made us like him, after his own Image. And can it be so much as thought that that Divine and essentially Rational Being will contradict himself, defeat his own work, and reveal that which is contrary to the first impressions of Nature? You take a wrong way to convince me. You say God has reveal'd it, and therefore it can be no contradiction. You must first prove that there is no contradiction in the thing it self, before you can satisfy me that he has reveal'd it. *Orthod.*



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*Orthod.* God then must go out of his own ways, and his Thoughts are to be accommodated to yours, or else cannot be receiv'd? You will prescribe Laws to the Divine Majesty. It must be made to bow to your weak conceptions, and the all wise Creator must stoop to a poor ignorant Creature. Pray, is this Reason or obstinacy? You would fain struggle with a Principle of that mighty clearness and solidity, that it commands an assent from all Men, and is really the true and last resolution of all this great Controversy. If God has reveal'd it, you may cry out contradiction to the end of the World. There will still be none, and you will only shew your weakness. Prove that it is not reveal'd, and then and not before the business is done. shew that your Reason has that character of Authority and Infallibility which the Scripture has, and then talk of contradictions. Had you ever known any part of the Mystery, if first it had not been Reveal'd? How then can you find out contradictions in that which does so much transcend all your conceptions; of which you know so little; and which does not lie within the reach of our little Argumentations, but rests wholly on the *Basis* of the Divine Authority?

I beg of you to tell me, whether God cannot propose to us any thing to believe which is above Reason? And whether what is above our Reason can be said to be contrary to it? In resolving these two Questions, you answer your Self. The *Trinity* in *Unity* is a discovery made by God, which is above our Reason, and therefore cannot be contrary to it. The contradiction can-

not come from the declaration of God : For God cannot contradict himself. The All-wise God cannot utter a contradictory Proposition. It is not seated in the thing it self ; for there is no such thing as contradiction to be imagin'd in the Divine Nature. It comes therefore only from our weak Apprehensions. And how we can place a contradiction in an object infinitely above all the power and reach of our Reason , be your self judge ?

*Socin.* This is the common Subterfuge of your Writers. And this they are so pleas'd with, that they have made it a general Answer. Let them enjoy it to all intents and purposes. But I deny that God can oblige us to believe what is above Reason. This appears to me an Imposition unworthy of the thoughts which we have of God. To be plain : Whatsoever is above my Reason, is incomprehensible to me. That which is incomprehensible is nothing to me. I cannot believe what I cannot understand.

*Orthod.* 'Tis because you cannot understand, that you must believe. Faith is to over-rule your Reason. The way to understand is to believe as *Isaias* expresses it, *ch.* 7. 9. according to the *Septuagint*. Faith is so far from being destructive of Reason, that of the contrary side it improves and perfects it.

*Socin.* I wish I could be satisfy'd of the truth of this.

*Orthod.* If the nature of Faith and Reason were truly establish'd, I am apt to think that a very great part of our disputes would be at an end.

*Socin.* Pray let us endeavour at it with Candor  
and

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and Sincerity. It is late now ; but you must promise me the honour of your Company at a small Dinner to morrow ; and after Dinner we shall talk fully to this.

*Orthod.* I hate afternoon studies, and afternoon disputes. The Body then oppresses the Mind. Nor are the Spirits capable of that intense application which the clearing a difficulty requires. I give all the forenoon to my thoughts, the middle part of the Day to my self, and the Evening to my Friends. At that time I will wait on you. Perhaps I may bring a Friend along with me.

*Socin.* If he is your Friend, he will have neither *Pedantry* in his looks, nor harshness in his manners. Do not fail.

*Orthod.* I will not.

## The Third DIALOGUE.

*Orthod.* **Y**OU see I am come according to my Promise.

*Socin.* Not altogether ; for you gave me some hopes that you would bring a Friend along with you.

*Orthod.* I design'd it. But he had made an appointment which could not be dispens'd with. Besides, he being wholly in my sentiments, it would have look'd as if I had intended to overmatch you, and oppose two to one.

*Socin.* I should not have been afraid of that. For I think that the defender of Reason has a mighty advantage. All Mankind is of his side. It is their Freehold ; and if they part with it to believe impossibilities, they make a very foolish exchange.

*Orthod.* *Christianity* proposes no impossibilities, and is so far from being an Enemy to Reason, that it is the most Rational System in the World. Things which actually exist cannot be said to be impossible. Whatsoever it proposes is of that kind ; and though a great part of it transcends our comprehensions ; yet we ought not to deny it, but submit to it with an humble reverence : Expecting a blessed Life wherein we shall know, what we now believe, and clear perceptions,  
lucid

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lucid and glorious thoughts shall make a part of that blessed state which God has promis'd.

*Socin.* I am perswaded that there will be such a state, and that those magnificent promises which God has made us, will be fully perform'd. We shall know then infinitely more than we do now : And if at this time, the finding out any Truth so sensibly affects us ; how much more will it do so, when the glory of God shall be reveal'd in us, and Truth shall not appear in scatter'd and divided beams, or by intervals, but as it is in its ineffable Spring ? But for all that, I cannot be sensible that I must enslave my Reason, and un-Man my self in running after incomprehensible objects, of which I can neither give, nor receive any tolerable account.

*Orthod.* You are so offended at things incomprehensible : Pray are you the happy Man who finds nothing of that nature in the World ? Is it always day with you ? Do you never feel the cold and darkness of the approaching Night ?

*Socin.* No ! I should be then an incomprehensible Creature my self. I own to my grief that there are abundance of that sort of things. I say, to my grief : For I would, if I could, know every thing. But when I find a bar which stops me from going further, then I make a stand, and cannot conceive that I am any way concern'd in it. In a word as I have said before, what is incomprehensible is nothing to me.

*Orthod.* You put me in mind of a verse in *Hesiod*, wherein the old *Mythologist* says that *Credulity, and Incredulity have equally undone Mankind.* A thought more becoming a Christian,

than a Heathen ! From the first have sprung Superstition and Idolatry. Men have brought down their Adoration as low as their thoughts. They have worship'd Beasts and Plants, as irrational as the one, and as insensible as the other. The second has run them into other extreams. From *Polytheism* to *Atheism* ; from believing every thing to the believing nothing at all. It has produc'd *Deism*, not such as was the *Deism* of the first race of the World, when Nature taught Men sincerely to serve their Creator ; but such as loose and profane Persons have embrac'd, the better under that venerable Name to destroy Reveal'd Religion. Pardon me, if I say that *Socinianism* is another of its branches. Credulity has undone others, but Incredulity has ruin'd you.

*Socin.* You do us a double injury. *First*, In putting us with *Deists* and *Atheists*, whom you know we are no favourers of. *Secondly*, By charging us with Incredulity, when in all our Books, and Prints, we publickly profess to believe.

*Orthod.* That is, you assent to what comes within the compass of your Reason, but no further. You believe what you please, or how you please. What squares with your Thoughts shall be Faith. What does not must be rejected. You are then Believers at large, and such as St. *Austin* represents the *Manichæans*, *lib. de util. creden.* who would have Faith to be nothing but Reason.

*Socin.* No, we distinguish them. The one is not the other. We are satisfy'd of the Truth of those things, which Reason could never have demonstrated. We acknowledge a *Reveal'd Religion*,

*ligion*, and think it an infinite mercy of the Creator, to have sent the Lord *Christ* into the World to teach us the way to Heaven. But we are persuaded that Revelation contains nothing but what is Possible, Consistent with Reason, and easily understood. You have made *Christianity* *Mysterious*: That is, the plainest Religion in the World is become in your hands, obscure and intricate; and when you have nothing to say for your selves, you appeal to Faith, as to the last remedy.

*Orthod.* Give me leave to shew you the disingenuity, and weakness of this way of reasoning. You say that you are satisfy'd of the Truth of those things, which Reason could never have demonstrated. But at the same time you confine this principally to the matters of Fact related in the Gospel. Nay the Learned Author of *the Reasonableness of Christianity*, would unreasonably have confin'd it to the bare belief of CHRIST, being the *Messias*. But is there nothing else besides matter of Fact in the sacred Writings? Are we not told what that *Messias* is, as well as what he has done, his Nature as well as his Actions? Does not this matter of Fact depend upon a *Series*, or Concatenation of Divine Verities, which the Scripture has carefully attested? Does not the whole *Oeconomy* of the Gospel turn upon Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Are we not initiated in their Names to our Holy Religion? And does not that *Religion* teach us what they are in themselves, and what in relation to us?

But you have an easy and possible way, and that is to maim and mangle Religion. When it

is thus murder'd and disfigur'd, then it is consistent with Reason, and easily understood when it has nothing to say. Thus *Socinianism* by pretending to remove Mysteries from our Holy Religion, becomes it self a *Mystery*. It takes away the greatest part of the *Credenda*. Let another *Socinus* arise and take away the *Agenda* too, and then the World will be fitted with a delicate System of Religion.

*Socin.* Now I see you grow hot.

*Orthod.* No? But would it not amaze any Man to see *Christianity* thus abus'd by Men who own themselves to be *Christians*, and under a pretence of making Religion plain, easy, and rational, remove out of the way the most substantial parts of it. May not I wonder to see you deny your assent to things, because you pretend that they are not comprehensible; when at the same time you believe things of which you can give no sort of account, and which you must at last, as well as we, resolve into the Authority of the Revelation.

*Socin.* Pray prove that.

*Orthod.* Yes very easily. For instance amongst many things of this sort; you believe the Creation of the World; that is, you believe that the World and all that is in it was made of nothing. Now any thing to proceed of nothing, every thing to be made of nothing, is as great a contradiction and impossibility as one, and one, and one not to be three, but one. Out of nothing nothing is made, is a principle of a mighty evidence, to which all Mankind agrees. The most illiterate Clown perceives it as clearly as  
the



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the most sagacious Philosopher. On this the *Lycaum* built the Eternity of the World. *Tertullian Apolog. c. 11.* attributes it to *Pythagoras*, and *Proclus* to *Plato*, both I fear falsely. Others made matter to be eternally pre-existent. Others said that God was the World. I maintain, that though we can never conceive it; yet it is easier to imagine how Three Persons can subsist in one Nature, than that any one thing should be made of nothing.

*Socin.* No? I can easily conceive the Creation. The notion of an Almighty God producing all things, is neither arduous nor difficult. I may say with the Ancient, of whom *Clemens Alexand.* speaks, *Str. 5. That when I contemplate this great Fabrick of the World, I think I hear the Voice of God who commands it to Exist.* That infinite Essence, in whose mind are repositied the Essences of all things, can give them their several Existences when he pleases. None but *Moses* spoke worthy of God, when he brings in the Almighty commanding all things out of nothing with a word of his mouth.

*Orthod.* I must beg leave to say that this does not reach the difficulty. For if you run to the power of God, and the relation made of it by *Moses*, you plead Revelation for it. But does it make the thing more comprehensible? Do you know better after all this, how something is made of nothing? Is not still the contradiction the same? A contradiction, as your Friends exclaim so loud and so often, not in the words only, but in the thing it self. How would you take it, if pursuing your very principle I should

say, that the Revelation must be made consistent with Reason; that a possible sense is to be inquir'd after; that God is said to create, because he orders and disposes the eternally pre-existent Matter? Should I criticise, and as you have done in other places, alter particles in the Text of *Moses*, you would think that I am mad, and say, that when the Text is so plain, and the Revelation so express, what I imagine to be contradiction, is only the weakness of my Reason, which must not stand against the Authority of God.

Suffer me to retort the Argument upon you. I propose the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity, and produce the Divine Revelation for it. You cry out Contradiction, Impossibility, Incomprehensibility; I say all this in the case of Creation. You justly over-rule it by the Authority of the Revelation; why must I be deny'd the same privilege, and conclude that as I admit the one, so you ought to admit the other?

*Socin.* But then what signifies Reason, it it ought not to be judge in Religious Matters? And what Oppression must it lie under, if it is overrul'd by every thing which the Church will call Mystery.

*Orthod.* The Church calls nothing Mystery, but what is really such: Some sublime important Truth, which has an influence on Religion, and a perfect coherence with it: Of which we see some part, the rest remaining abstruse, and Reason being at a stand in its several inquiries about it. Thus 1 *Tim.* 3. 16. *And without Controversy great is the Mystery of Godliness; God was manifest*

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*in the Flesh.* What is propos'd to us is very plain, God assuming our Nature, and being made Man. This is a strong engagement to all the duties of Religion. And yet which way soever you take it ; it is still a great Mystery. Reason is infinitely puzzl'd, and has innumerable questions ready to offer, which it can never be satisfy'd in, because God has reveal'd so much and no more. Its duty is to submit and make to the veracity of God a sacrifice of its curiosity.

The same may be said of the Resurrection from the Dead, which *St. Paul* calls *1 Cor. 15. 51.* a *Mystery*. He shews clearly the certainty and advantage of a glorious coming to Life again. Yet it is still a *Mystery*. Take away the Divine Revelation ; and Reason, humane Reason will charge the doctrine of the Resurrection with contradiction, nonsense, impossibility. The same pretended objections will lie against the Mystery of the Holy Trinity ; only with this difference, that you are contented in the other points to bring your Reason to the obedience of Faith ; but in this you will be refractory.

It is strange to see Men's odd ways of managing Reason. In the study of Natural things when they can go no farther, then they enlarge upon the weakness of Reason, the misery of our Nature, the shortness of our sight, and the inability of our faculties. They acknowledge that God has hid abundance of objects from our eyes. But in the search after Mysteries, then Reason is strong ; it soars as high, and can look on the Sun as stedfastly as the Eagle. Nothing ought  
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to be Myſterious. Faith muſt not be our guide. It is no more the light of the Soul, but uſurpation and tyranny.

*Socin.* You have a perpetual inclination to miſ-repreſent us. We affirm, and we have affirm'd it a thouſand times, that we ought to be guided by Faith. But Faith muſt be rational. It is, ſays *St. Paul*, Rom. 12. 1. *our Reasonable ſervice*. If it is not ſuch, it is neither worthy of God who requires it, nor of Man who pays that debt to him. I ought not to believe at random, or give my aſſent to every thing, which even the Scripture propoſes. But I muſt examine how it is conſiſtent with the principles of that Reason which he has given me : Thus far I muſt believe, and no further. Reason firſt and laſt is to be the judge.

*Orthod.* Pray let us avoid thoſe perpetual *Equivocations*. Faith and Reason are always conſiſtent. I do not ſpeak of Reason as it is in us, but as it is in it ſelf ; with that admirable coherence of Principles flowing from one another, and concentring in God who is its Author. Had we Reason in that ſtate, and to that degree, ſuch I believe was that of innocent *ADAM*, I ſhould be reconcil'd to all your noiſe of Contradictions. But Reason as it is in us, is obſcure, apt to be intangl'd in the ſmalleſt thread, and uncertain where and how to fix it ſelf. But let it be conſider'd either of theſe ways, the conſiſtency of Faith and Reason muſt be always underſtood in ſubordination of the latter to the former. What a monſtrous attempt is this to determine Faith by Reason, and not Reason by Faith ?

*Socin.*

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*Socin.* What a pleasant distinction is this of Reason consider'd in it self, or as it is in us ? Of *ADAM's* Reason and ours ? As if *ADAM* was not such another Man as I am ; and Reason consider'd in it self could be different from what it is in me, and all Mankind !

*Orthod.* Yes indeed : Innocent *ADAM* just come out of the hands of his Maker, and taught immediately by that Infinite Spirit, who had given him his being, did Reason better than you or I. His perceptions were clearer : His apprehensions quicker : His abilities greater. Passion and Prejudice had not found the way to his Soul : Wine and Lust had not inflam'd him : Ambition and the Thirst of Gold had not depriv'd him. In a word, he was little Inferiour to the Angels themselves, both in Purity and Knowledge.

And why may not Reason be consider'd in it self, in that Divine Relation which it has to the Supream Truth ; calm and free in its propositions ; sincere and true in its inferences, without a desire of appearing what it is not, from what it is, when clog'd with the impressions of a sinful Body, captivated by a corrupted Will, led into a thousand silly errors, ever seeking and never finding a place to rest in ?

These are the sad effects of the first Transgression. *Man was made upright at the beginning, but they sought out many inventions*, says one to whom the Scripture gives the character of the most Knowing of Men. I tell you, that in this crazy Age of the World, and in the great decay of *Christianity*, what we call Reason, are only the miserable relicks of it.

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*Socin.* You know by whom it is deny'd that *ADAM*'s Transgression had any other influence on his Posterity, than to shew them an ill example. For my part I believe, that the World is the same as ever it was, and that if *ADAM* had not sinn'd, we had still been subject to the same Infirmities. Your Doctrine of Original Sin is as Mysterious as the rest.

*Orthod.* It is so far from being Mysterious, that nothing discovers it self with greater clearness. All the Pride of Man cannot hide it. Our own unhappy experience contradicts our pretended demonstrations against it; and in this, our Heart evidently opposes our Mind. But we have lost the main question, let us return to it. I say then, that you give Reason too great a Scope, and that in our present state it ought not to determine Faith, but be determin'd by it.

*Socin.* But still we talk of Faith and Reason, and have not yet agreed what they are. Pray tell me what is Reason? But tell it me plainly. Let us have no *Cartesianism*, no Metaphysical Abstractions, no Notions, no Ideas. If I cannot walk in a smooth and open Path, I am resolv'd to stay at Home.

*Orthod.* I am my self of your Mind. I take then Reason to be a *Faculty of the Soul*, by which we endeavour to find out the Truth, either by way of Inference, or by a plain and simple Perception. What have you to Except against this?

*Socin.* Nothing at all. For I think that all our Knowledge comes these two ways. Yet if the word, *Endeavour*, falls upon the last, as well as

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as upon the first part of the definition, it seems somewhat incongruous. For simple Perceptions offer themselves to us, and are almost the only things of which the Certainty is not disputed. But yet as it is by comparing the least Known, with the most Known Principles that we do Reason; and that every thing which we call a simple Perception, is not such, I willingly agree in it. Then go on and tell me what is Faith?

*Orthod.* Faith is the Gift of God, by which he Inlightens our Mind, and inclines our Heart to assent to what he proposes to us to believe.

*Socin.* This I do not like so well as the other. Though I know it comes from St. *Austin*, and is commonly receiv'd by the admirers of that Father. Faith is the Gift of God, as all things are in a general sense. But if by it you suppose an immediate Act of his Grace by which we believe; then Faith is no more our choice, or a favour offer'd to all Men, but confin'd only to few. How can it be said that God inlightens our Mind, when what you call Mysteries are as obscure and unknown after as before we believe? And for that expression of *inclining our Will*, it is not sufferable, it borders so much upon the Doctrine of *Calvin*, which you know the Church of *England* is not fond of. It shews an impossibility of believing in them whose Hearts are not inclin'd, and consequently it makes unbelief to be no Sin.

*Orthod.* The Definition is I confess of St. *Austin*: But I maintain that it is both *Christian* and *Catholick*. The Scripture has taught, and the Church embrac'd it. Joh. 6. 4. No Man can  
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come unto me, except the Father which has sent me draw him. Ibid. v. 65. No Man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. Phil. 1. 29. To you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake. Rom. 12. 3. We are commanded to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every Man the measure of Faith.

Hence the Church has express'd her self in these words Can. 7. of the Council of Aurange. *If any thinks that by the strength of Nature he can think, or do any good thing relating to Salvation; or assent to the Truth reveal'd without the illumination, or inspiration of the Holy Spirit, HERÆTICO FALLITUR SPIRITU, HE IS DECEIV'D BY AN HERETICAL SPIRIT,* not understanding this place of the Apostle, 2 Cor. 3. 5. *Not that we are sufficient of our selves to do any thing as of our selves: But our sufficiency is of God.*

This does not hinder Faith from being our choice, any more than it does Vertue; the assistance of God helping, but not altering our Nature.

The obscurity of Mysteries, even when we believe, is no objection against the inlightning of the Mind. For this supposes not a clear insight into the Nature of the thing, but only a conviction that there is such a thing reveal'd. 1 Cor. 13. 12. *For now we see through a Glass darkly, ὡς ἀνιγμῶτι, in enigmatē, as in a riddle...* Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am also known.

But how can you give to the inclining of the will



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will the name of insufferable and bordering upon *Calvinianism*; when you cannot but know that it is the Work of God, and the Prayer of Man to him? Psal. 119. 27. *Make me to understand the way of thy Precepts.* v. 35. *Make me to go in the Path of thy Commandments.* v. 36. *Incline my Heart to thy Testimonies.* Prov. 16. 1. *The preparation of the Heart is from the Lord.*

The Church, you say, is not fond of *Calvin's* Principles. True, but our abhorrency from *Calvinianism* must not drive us to *Pelagianism*. I may detest an opinion inconsistent with the goodness of God, without throwing my self into an excess injurious to the Grace of CHRIST. The Definition then is good and safe, but because I am willing, if possible, to remove all your prejudices, I will put it in fewer words. *Faith*, then, is a Firm assent to what God has revealed to us.

*Socin.* I cannot quarrel with this. It is well that once at least you will be plain.

*Orthod.* It is well that there is something which you will not deny. This Definition, though not so exact as it ought to be, is enough to shew you the insufficiency of Reason. For if Reason can embrace all that is necessary for a Man to know, there can be no necessity of Revelation. This of it self supposes and is a convincing proof of our ignorance. For if there are objects which *Reason* cannot reach, but must owe their discovery to a higher and more infallible Principle; then Reason is palpably weak and imperfect. There cannot be a more sensible Argument of its Deficiency.

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But there is another inconvenience as discernible as this. Reason not only cannot reach the object which Revelation presents; but also the object once presented, it cannot be conversant about it, nor examine the several parts or prospects of it. It cannot come to a view near enough to employ its Faculties in it. The account of which is very plain, and it is this: That as Reason with all its sagacity and penetration could never find out such an object, and knows only that there is such a thing because God presents it, and must rely for the truth of it upon God's veracity; so the nature of the object propos'd must still remain obscure, because there is as great an impossibility in finding out the nature of the object, as the object it self.

In natural things Reason meets with an object fit for its inquiry, and not only finds out the object, but even penetrates what can be known of it, because both are commensurate: Or, to avoid hard words, which neither you, nor I love, because there is a fair proportion between the object, and the powers and faculties of Reason. But in things *supernatural*, which word is enough to decide the difference, if you would but consider of it, there is so infinite a distance between the object propos'd, and the weak perceptions of Reason, that if we are just to our selves, and have any respect for the order which the All-wise God has establish'd, we cannot so much as pretend to an inquiry into the Nature of the thing offer'd.

This highly vindicates the wise and sober Answer

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swer of abundance of Learned Men amongst us, who in the disputes about the Blessed *Trinity* and *Incarnation* have told you, that these are Mysteries above our Reason : That we ought to rely upon the Divine Revelation, and not pretend to give an account of things Incomprehensible. This you have thought to be an evasion of all your pretended contradictions ; you have derided it ; and call'd it a *Trinity of the Mob of ignorant and lazy Doctors*. Whereas if you weigh the Principles laid before you, it will appear very firm and solid. For to state contradictions in an object Reveal'd, when that object is above all our Perceptions ; when all that we know is that it is, and that too, because it is Reveal'd ; but are altogether ignorant what it is. Reason then soars above its nature, and what you call contradictions are only the stumblings of Reason, which striving to climb up an inaccessible rock, is shamefully flung on its back and overthrown.

*Socin.* But then you make Faith the obscurest thing in the World, and what advantage is it to us, if our darkness is remov'd by a greater, even a darkness that may be felt ? If what you say is true, I know little by the help of Reason, and much less by that of Revelation.

*Orthod.* I make Faith what God has made it. The things which he proposes exist and are certain. He is pleas'd to cast a veil over them, and we ought not to presume to take it off. It is he that has made us and not we our selves ; and in vain we strive to start out of the limits to which he has confin'd us. Nor is the homage and submission of our understandings consistent with clear

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Perceptions of things. It would no more be Faith but Knowledge. We should not be *in via*, as the Fathers speak, in the way which leads to Heaven, which is a state of obscurity, labour, humility, and the fear of God: But *in Patria*, in Heaven it self, a place of intuition, tranquillity, glory, and perfect love.

But let me tell you that Faith has that mighty advantage, that if it is not the clearest evidence, it is at least the greatest certainty in the World. All our assurance in other things is humane. The very Principles of *Geometry* are no more. But Faith has a Divine Foundation, and that is, the Authority of God. St. *Chrysostom* was so perswaded of the truth of this, that *Homil 21. in Epist. ad Heb.* he did not doubt to affirm that *he had no Faith who believ'd not more firmly the things reveal'd, than those which are daily the object of sense.* You know the Famous saying of St. *Ambrose de sacram. l. 1. cap. 5. Tolle argumenta ubi Fides queritur.* Away with all your Reasons, where Faith is the question.

*Socin.* If you get amongst the Fathers, we shall have a Sea of Authorities which you know we have no very great esteem for. I wish you would lay them all aside. But if you will not, what think you of *Lactantius*, who *Instit. l. 2. cap. 7.* speaks thus. *Oportet in ea re maxime, &c. Every Man is oblig'd, particularly in that wherein his own being is concern'd, to trust to himself; and it is much better to endeavour with the best judgment and sense that we can, to find out the truth, than to suffer our selves to be deceiv'd by other People's errors; as if we were wholly Strangers to Reason: God ha-*  
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ving given all Men such a share of Wisdom, as to be able to search into those things which are unknown to us, and to examine those that are not. The same Principle *Minutius Fælix* makes use of against *Cæcilius*. And this is the very Argument of *Theodoret*, in his first Discourse *de curand. grac. affect.*

It may be said of *Lactantius* his assertion, that nothing can be truer and better. It does justice to God, who is the Author and Giver of every good and perfect gift; and to Man, by owning his great and distinguishing Privilege. You have spoke of Faith very well and accurately. But for all that do you know what it is to blaspheme Reason. It is to wound Mankind in the most sensible part, and to put us out of a capacity of ever acting like Men. Reason is a light which comes down from the Father of lights. As the natural light discovers it self and all other objects; so Reason the light of the Soul discovers its native excellency, and is the tryal of all other things. Its eagerness in the pursuit of Truth, is a proof that it is made for it, and capable of it. It looks much like *Priest-craft*, to desire me to shut my Eyes, and trust my self to another guide, whilst I can see my way as perfectly as any other.

I had once a great respect for St. *Austin*, but I have lost it, since I read a passage of his, wherein he strangely abuses humane nature. It is *lib. 2. c. 15. de serm. dom. in monte. Hominis anima rationalis lumine veritatis vel tenuiter pro sui capacitate illustratur, ut verum aliquid in ratiocinando sentiat.* The rational Soul of Man receives accord-

ing to its capacity, small illustrations and glances of light, that by Reasoning it may feel something of Truth. Thus the Doctors of the Church run down Reason, and perceive not that they run down Mankind at the same time.

*Orthod.* You are in the right to lay the Fathers aside, for they are all against you. I should be glad to be rid of a witness, who I am sure will swear home against me. The Author of *Christianity not Mysterious* has invalidated their evidence to some purpose. He will not allow above five or six to have been Men of sense; and to shew how contemptible they are, he flatters himself that some ages hence he will be look'd on as a Father. I hope he is no Prophet, and does not see so much extravagance in the succeeding times.

*Lactantius* every way an admirable Author, argues against Idolatry. He says very well that no Religion is to be taken upon trust, and that in so great a concern every one ought to judge for himself. Idolatry is so unreasonable a thing, that whosoever admits it, must be a stranger to Reason; God having given every Man such a measure of Wisdom as to reject that which is so openly bad, and look for somewhat better. But he never pretended that amongst Christians, who so unanimously submit to the Revelation, which God has made of himself in the Holy Scriptures; Man was to dispute against God, and Reason to struggle with Faith. Read the first Chapter of the first, and the greatest part of the third Book, and you will see that from the contradictions of Philosophers, he proves Reason

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Reason to be insufficient to find out the truth, and that it is only to be met with in that Religion, where it is divinely Reveal'd.

*Minutius Fælix* argues after the same manner. *Cæcilius* pleaded a Tradition of Idolatry, in which he thought himself secure. *Minutius* answers, that he ought to appeal to his own Reason, which will evidently shew him the folly and impiety of *Polytheism*. And all that *Theodoret* insists on is, that the simplicity of our Holy Faith wants not solid and rational arguments, by which it is confirm'd. Such I take to be the Authority of the Revelation, which in strength and clearness is superiour to any Argument whatsoever.

But laying all this aside : When you have done all you can, and writ never so fine a Panegyrick on Reason, the strength of it cannot be better judg'd of, than by its use. You will be asham'd of ever pleading for Reason, when you consider how the great Masters of it have been distracted ! And you will say with *Jesus Christ*. Matt. 6. 23. *If therefore the Light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness ?*

The first Men of the World, though so near their beginning, and the impressions of Reason, so much the stronger because nearest to their spring, yet generally run into Idolatry and Violence. You know how few they were who call'd upon the Name of the Lord. The Church was confin'd to the Family of *Noah*. The fury of the Flood was an eminent instance of a Reason, which had so far wandred from its Principles that it was past recalling, and was fit for nothing but destruction.

When the World after that was so far replenish'd, as to afford great *Monarchies* and numerous Nations; you see Reason as insufficient as before, and Men as obstinately bent to depart from their Creator. I will not run through their several *Idolatries*. The *Egyptians* so famous for their Learning, who thought themselves, and were look'd upon by others as highly Rational Men, did debase Reason to that degree, as to make Gods of their very Roots and Plants. *A happy People*, says pleasantly *Juvenal*, who see their *Deities grow in their Gardens*! But you will say they were unthinking People who had not consider'd the matter, or inquir'd into the Nature of Reason. But what must you think of the Ingrossers of Learning and Reputation, I mean the *Greeks*? Men who valu'd themselves upon being inquisitive, treated all the parts of Philosophy, and fill'd the World with Sects and Systems.

- Good God! The Dogmaticks thought Reason so clear as to be certain of every thing, and to doubt of nothing: An extravagance of which they had a confutation in themselves. These *Socrates*, the wise *Socrates* takes up, and is so far from taking Reason to be clear, that he professes that if any thing was certain, it was this, *That he knew nothing to be certain*. This Assertion *Arcefilas* and *Pyrrho* cannot be reconcil'd with; carry the doubt yet further, and find no certainty in that very Proposition, but make Hesitation, and Fluctuation the Principles of their Doctrine.

They are not more lucky in their search about Happiness, Providence, the Being of God, and the Original of the World. There is a strange  
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confusion in their Opinions, and an incredible weakness in their Arguments. They have verifi'd the saying of Solomon, Ecclef. 3. 11. *Mundum tradidit disputationi eorum. God has made the World the subject of their disputes.* Or as our Translation reads it. *He has set the World in their Heart, so that no Man can find out the Work that God made from the beginning to the end.* And Ecclef. 8. 17. *Though a Man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea further, though a Wise Man think to know it, yet he shall not be able to find it.* This is the Reason which you cry up so much, and these are your Rational Men.

*Socin.* All this is a Satyr upon Reason and nothing else. Yet it cannot detract from its dignity. And it is a consequence ill drawn, That because some Men have Reason'd ill, therefore we cannot Reason well. Several People have had but one Eye, therefore we have not two. The *Egyptians* and *Greeks* have been delirious, therefore we must be so too. They did conclude at random in those days, because they wanted all the means of Erudition, which we have, and therefore we must talk at the same rate, though a long experience, innumerable Books, and accurate Methods in all Arts and Sciences have wonderfully refin'd our Notions. With you the dawning of the Day gives more light than the full Noon; and the Morning is wiser than the Evening of our Lives. Pray let us lay aside these common places, and come to a closer way of reasoning.

Is there such a thing as Reason, or is there not? If there is not, then we are like the Beasts that perish,

perish, incapable of either Reward or Punishment, because incapable of Good and Evil. But if there is, then it must be given us for some end, and it must be fitted for the attainment of that for which it is given. You have granted in your Definition of Reason, that *it is a Faculty of the Soul by which we endeavour to find out the Truth.* Is Truth then attainable, or is it not? If it is not, then your Definition is worth nothing. If it is, then Reason is not only the instrument by which we find it, but also the judge of that Truth which we find. Not that I pretend that Truth is not greater than our Reason, and that Reason penetrates the whole extent of the Truth which it contemplates: But I maintain that as the object falls under the scrutiny of Reason, it must judge of it, and what it affirms or denies concerning it is true. I know that Men have not the same strength of Apprehension. That which seems a demonstration to me, will be justly call'd an impertinence by another. But I say that it is the touchstone of all that is propos'd to us; and that nothing can be laid before us as Truth, in which we are concern'd, but Reason must inquire into and judge of it.

*Orthod.* But what is all this, but what has been said a thousand times, and what you have offer'd to me already? Does this resolve at all the difficulty propos'd. It were easy to me to shew you that the Reason of this age is not better than that of the *Greeks* and the *Romans*: That 'tis not to Books or Experiments, but to Religion, that you owe the improvement of your Reason, and that the best *Christians* ever made the best Philosophers.

Philosophers. But granting all that you can pretend from that which you call close Reasoning what is it to the purpose? Admitting that you conclude right in all those things which are within the reach of Reason, which is not only disputable, but even false; is it not altogether Deficient in what is above it? Foolish and rash assertion, that because Reason knows some things, therefore it must know all things: And that because it can grapple with natural, therefore it may with super-natural Objects.

These three things Men are guided by, *SENSE, REASON, FAITH*. We believe first our Senses. We see, hear, smell, taste, touch; from these we receive the first impressions. But because they are fallible, imposing, and like to make us draw false consequences, Reason comes to help us. It rectifies the mistakes of sense. The larger operations of the Soul embrace Principles of a greater extent, and with an incredible eagerness will search what they are, as well as what they appear. This is the ground of *Philosophical* inquiries. But Man is not contented with this. For besides that the way is painful, tedious, and yielding very often neither profit nor pleasure, he can fix no where. He finds in himself a desire of happiness, which no created being can procure. Supposing that he can measure the Heavens, understand luminous Bodies, be acquainted with the laws of Motion and Matter; this is still far from answering the vast capacity of a Soul, which distasted with inferior objects, aspires at the Knowledge of God's Nature, of his own Immortality, and of a future State after this Life. There

There is somewhat which he is sensible is wanting to the perfection of his own Being. He sees at a mighty distance great and venerable objects, but cannot draw near to them, being kept back by his inaccessible light of one side, and the obscurity and weakness of his Reason of the other. The merciful God will not discover himself plainly to him. If he did, he could not bear the Splendor; *For no Man shall see God, and live.* But he has ordain'd Faith as a *Medium* between the darkness of this Life, and the Glory of the next. He has commanded Man to believe, fixing thereby all the uncertainties, and rectifying all the mistakes of Reason. And has given him the greatest encouragement that can be, by assuring him that he shall know hereafter, what he now believes.

Supposing that one should argue for Sense against Reason, as you do for Reason against Faith, you would say to him, that Sense in a Matter, which depends from Sense, is the best judge; but that in a Matter about which Reason alone is conversant, it has nothing to do, because the object is much above its reach. Should Sense reply, God has fitted me for some end, and that end is the apprehending of Truth, and consequently attainable, or else it is no end; and by this I am fitted to judge of such, and such objects; you would say to him, Sense is one thing, and Reason is another. Sense is to be so far from pretending to be the judge of Reason, that it has nothing to do with it. Pray be just and say the same of Reason. It will strive to inquire into the business of Faith. Faith will  
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own that concerning things within the compass of Reason, there can be no fitter judge. Reason will tell Faith, that it contradicts it self, that it proposes impossibilities, that it is every way incomprehensible. Faith will laugh at this, and ask how Reason can talk of contradictions, and impossibilities, and incomprehensibilities, where it has nothing to do, and has no sort of aptitude to see whether it is so or no. I am sure this is their Sence who ever pretended to understand those matters. *St. Austin* in his Book, *de morib. Eccl. Cathol.* In the third Book *contra Acad.* c. 19 . . . .

*Socin.* I have declar'd my self already against citations of the Fathers. Favour me so far as to bring in no more. 'Tis not what they say, but what you say, which I am willing to hear. What *St. Austin* tells *Adimantus*, *Volusianus*, *Honoratus*, is nothing to me. He was a Man of Sence, but I build no part of my Faith upon his or the Fathers sayings. I like your way of speaking very well: Pray go on.

*Orthod.* What you require of me is highly unjust. For though I build my Faith no more than your self upon the Fathers, but only upon the reveal'd word of God; yet I think their Authority to be great and considerable. As our Holy Faith is the same now as in the beginning of *Christianity*, because a part of its Character is to have been once deliver'd; so I conceive that it is now best defended by the same methods which the Christian Doctors us'd at first. When our Mysteries were propos'd to the Heathens, they were as quick as you can be at objecting contradictions.

They

They magnify'd Reason as much as any of you have done since. The Fathers did strenuously apply themselves to shew its weakness and insufficiency, and by asserting the necessity of Faith overrul'd all their objections. When you have done all that you can, you must at last come to this; only with a far greater disadvantage of your side, because the Heathens rejected that very principle which you admit, and that is the Divine Revelation. You cannot oppose the Authority of the Fathers, without doing the Christian Church a vast injury, and robbing it of one of its greatest Ornaments. This very thing must be a prejudice against you, that you have renew'd the old objections of the Heathens against this Sacred Doctrine, and despis'd those very ways which were us'd by the Fathers in the confutation of their errors.

*Socin.* You perpetually cry up the Fathers, and yet would not be bound in this very point to make good their Reasonings. Are there not three Faculties of the Soul, and yet but one Soul; the Root, Bark, and Branches of a Tree, and yet the same Tree; *Peter, James, and John*, three Men, and yet the same humane Nature; are not these and twenty more such instances delicate proofs of a *Trinity in Unity*?

*Orthod.* They are no proofs, nor ever were intended to be such. What can be made of them is, that they are Illustrations, faint Adumbrations, or Resemblances of the inexplicable *Mystery*. The Fathers requir'd believing, and not reasoning. They affirm'd Reason incapable of judging of *Mysteries*, and resolv'd all into Faith, *that*  
firm

firm assent to what God has Reveal'd. You may see this Elegantly treated by Arnobius, who calls Reason blind, uncertain, weak, and owing to the Mercy of God, that himself has spoken to inform it.

Lactantius is positive lib. 3. c. 1. that the knowledge and worship of God cannot be attain'd by Reason or Sense ; and therefore that laying aside all these Masters of an earthly Philosophy, who have so contradicted one another, and have left nothing certain ; we should look up to God, who Tradidit Sacramentum veræ Religionis, ut revelatæ divinitus veritatis cognitionem consequamur, Has given us the Sacred Institution of the true Religion, that we may attain the Knowledge of that Truth which is Divinely Reveal'd.

And in the same place ; Divina tradita sunt breviter & nude. Nec decebat aliter, ut cum Deus ad hominem loqueretur argumentis assereret suas voces, tanquam fides ei non haberetur ; sed ut oportuit est locutus quasi rerum omnium supremus Judex ; cujus non est argumentari sed pronunciare verum. Divine things are deliver'd in a short and plain manner. Nor was it fit that it should be otherwise. As if God was not to be believ'd, except he gives Reasons for what he says. He has spoke as the supreme Judge of all things, whose part is not to dispute, but simply to pronounce what is true.

Tertullian de anim. Cui enim veritas comperta sine Deo ? Cui Deus cognitus sine Christo ? Cui Christus exploratus sine Spiritu Sancto ? Cui Spiritus accommodatus sine Fidei Sacramento ? Who has been able to attain the Truth without God ? Who has known God without Christ ? Who has known Christ without the Holy Spirit ? Who has known the Holy Spirit but by the sacred way of Faith ? Gre-

Gregory the Great *Hom. 26. in Evang.* assures that *Fides non habet meritum cui Humana Ratio præbet experimentum.* That Faith is of no value which is grounded upon the inquiries of humane Reason.

St. *Austin* has treated this very argument in abundance of places with the utmost accuracy. The *Greek* are perfectly agreed in this with the *Latin* Fathers. It is the Divinity of *Origen*, of *Theodoret*, of St. *Chrysostom*. I will go further with you, and say that this is the fence of the generality of Divines; which has made that great Schoolman *Aquinas* lay this as a Principle in that part of his Works, which is much the best of all his Writings, and that 2a. 2da. qu. 2. art. 4. *Ratio Humana in rebus Humanis est multum deficiens, cujus signum est, quia Philosophi de rebus Humanis naturali investigatione perscrutantes, in multis erraverunt, & sibi ipsis contraria senserunt. Ut ergo esset indubitata & certa cognitio apud homines de Deo, oportuit quod Divina eis per modum Fidei traderentur, quasi à Deo dicta qui mentiri non potest.* Humane Reason is much deficient, even in Humane things, of which this is a proof, that the Philosophers in that search about them which they made by natural inquiries, have mightily err'd, and contradicted themselves. And therefore to the end that Men's Knowledge concerning God might be certain and undoubted, it was necessary that Divine Matters should be deliver'd to them by way of Faith as spoken by God, who cannot lye.

*Socin.* Then we are no more Men, but Stocks and Stones. Our obedience to God is no more choice, but necessity. If Reason has nothing to do in matters of Faith, Men cease to be reasonable as soon as they Commence Christians. We  
are



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are all oblig'd to you for divesting us of that by which we are like God. At this rate any extravagance will be call'd a *Mystery*; any little Priest will obtrude and defend it; and under the specious name of Faith overcome the clearest demonstrations of Reason. Once more this is *Priest-Craft* with a vengeance. Pray tell me what I must do with my Reason hereafter, and into what sort of Creature it shall transmigrate, since a Christian is no more capable of it.

*Orthod.* This is all heat and madness. I am for Reason as much as your self. But I would have it kept within its due bounds. It is of great use in Religion, and I am not out of hopes to make you sensible of it.

*Socin.* When the Sea gives over ebbing and flowing, and not before. You have prov'd that in matters of Faith Reason is to be silent; and now you tell me that it is of great use. How can this be reconcil'd?

*Orthod.* We have spoken too long to enter now on a new discourse. Let us put it off till I have the happiness to see you. In the mean time let me beg a double favour of you. *First*, to consider impartially what has been said between us. *Secondly*, that in case you will not be persuaded, the difference of our Sentiments should not in the least alter our Friendship.

*Socin.* I should be too great a sufferer my self in denying any part of this. I was ready to ask it, but you prevented me. When shall we meet again?

*Orthod.* To Morrow if you will in My Lord Bishop's fine Garden. There is no Body now there. We shall not only be free, but also  
H enjoy

98      *A Conference between an*  
enjoy for some hours the prettiest Solitude  
I know about the Town.

*Socin.* Done.

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## The Fourth DIALOGUE.

*Orthod.* I hope I have not tir'd your Patience.  
How long have I made you stay here ?

*Socin.* A very little time, and that without  
any trouble; for this is really a very curious  
Place. Nature and Art have combin'd to make  
it fine. How large and firm are those Walks ?  
What a plenty of excellent Fruit adorns these  
Walls ? How proud is this *Parterre* of an infinite  
variety of Native and Foreign Flowers ? But let  
us hasten to the end, where a small River calmly  
and silently runs; and stately Trees on both  
sides will scarce suffer the Sun to view the Wa-  
ter.

*Orthod.* In such places as this was Philosophy  
born. There speculative Men secure from the  
noise and vices of Towns, gave themselves to  
Contemplation. Their manners were innocent,  
and their way of living plain and unaffected.  
They ador'd the Author of all these things, and  
spent their time in serious and profitable inquiries.

But these Men of thoughts grew fond of im-  
parting their secrets, and brought Philosophy  
into

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into Towns. There it became proud, vain, and full of Talk. It must come back again, or else it will never be what it was in that Blessed Age. But let us draw to that small Building at the end of this Walk?

*Socin.* We are going to it. It is a place consecrated to Solitude. There is written without in large Characters, NO PASSIONS CAN COME IN HERE. And within, NEVER LESS ALONE THAN WHEN ALONE. There we shall sit down, and you will discharge your Promise of giving Reason satisfaction for your violent Invectives against it.

*Orthod.* I never injur'd Reason. It would be an unsuccessful attempt. All that I have endeavour'd to do, is to keep it within its due bounds. In our Disputes as well as in all other things we are apt to run into extreams. Our Thoughts of Reason are either too great or too mean. We give it too much or too little. And this comes from want of using our selves to *think soberly*. Thus some believe themselves to be all Eyes, and obstinately run on with Notions of which they never had patience enough to consider every part, and which when examin'd, are not what they appear'd to be at first. I have observ'd that most of us are more taken with probability than Truth. What is fine, smooth, and easy steals away our assent, which a further and closer inquiry would oblige us to deny.

Your Books are all of that sort. You have espous'd a Principle that Reason ought to be the Judge in Religious matters. This carries along with it a great deal of Probability, and insinu-

ates it self the more easily, because it flatters our Pride. But when this comes to be thoroughly examin'd the objections against it are so many, that all that can be said of it is this, that it is only an Opinion which indeed appears probable, but is certainly false.

*Socin.* Pray sit down, and acquit your self. Shew the consistency of Reason with Faith and its great use in Religion. Or else I must accuse you of Non-performance.

*Orthod.* We cannot treat this with any Candor except you acknowledge, *First*, that as Reason has its Beauties and Excellencies, it has also its Deformities and Weaknesses. It is a light which God has given us to know him and our selves. But that light suffers frequent *Eclipses*. It shines dim, and is often put out. We are not wise all the hours of the day. Sometimes our thoughts rise as the Sea when it overflows the neighbouring Shoars; and sometimes again they sink into a small and contemptible Channel. We own and disown, admit and reject, are pleas'd this minute with a conclusion, and the next lay it aside; look upon those things as Errors which we formerly embrac'd as Truths, and take those for Truths which we once rejected as Errors.

*Secondly*, You must grant me that Reason is not the same in all Men; I mean as to its vigor and efficacy. In some a happy Nature with the addition of a careful Education, Reading, Conversation, and Experience, makes it quick and active. It is admirable to see how some Men will like lightning run through a mass of propositions, and understand a thing as soon as it is offer'd.

offer'd. But in others it is heavy and dull, oppress'd by the matter in which it is inclos'd, almost sunk ; and as the *Physicians* say of Blood, incapable of circulating through the abundance of viscus humours, by which it is detain'd. The far greater part of Mankind is of this sort. Of the common Saylor, Souldiers, Labourers, Women, it may be said that the Body is truly the gaol of the Soul, from which it seldom breaks out, to exert any acts answerable to the dignity of its nature.

*Thirdly*, I beg also that you would not deny, that though there is so visible a difference in the exercise of Reason, and some Men do almost as far exceed others, as these exceed irrational Creatures ; yet there is some universal Principle fitted to every one's capacity, and in which all Mankind agree. Such is the search after Happiness. The grossest and most illiterate of the Sons of *ADAM* are as much convinc'd of this as your self, whose erudition is certainly great. This is not learned from Books, or taken up upon the credit of Authors, but is an invincible inclination which every one finds in his own Heart.

*Socin.* I grant all this but your compliment to me.

*Orthod.* All this granted, I proceed, and presume to be positive that Reason can never shew to Man the way to Happiness. For though it concludes very well from the Works of Creation that there is a God, who is the Author and giver of that happiness, and that the service of God is the way to obtain it ; yet what we ought to believe of that God, how he is willing to be

serv'd, and which way we can appease his anger and secure his favour to us, is altogether above the reach of Reason. *Rom. 11. 13. His ways are past finding out.*

The Doctrine of a Covenant of Grace, of a Redeemer in whom we are pardon'd and accepted, and who by the Sacrifice of himself should reconcile us to God, are Mysterious depths to which Reason, the most clear sighted Reason has not the least access.

It was necessary then that Authority should supply that want, and God reveal what it was impossible Man should acquaint himself with. Revelation is that which informs our understandings, cures our ignorance, rectifies our mistakes, and by a short and infallible way leads us to happiness. This the Philosophers aim'd at by the strength of Natural Reason, but very unsuccessfully. You know what *Socrates* and *Plato*, what the School of *Epicurus*, what *Zeno* and the *Porticus* said to it. Their Systems were vain, foolish, flat, and unpracticable. This important discovery was to be the work of him who *had the words of Eternal Life*. And the wisest and best Definition that ever was given of it, is *Job. 17. 3. And this is Life Eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*

I call this a short and an infallible way. It is infallible, because propos'd by him who can neither deceive, nor be deceiv'd. It is short, because it cuts off all the *Ambages* and uncertainties which Reason is intangl'd in, and rests upon a rock, and that is, the Authority of God.

You

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You make Faith so difficult a thing, and exclaim loud when we endeavour to bring you over to it. But for my part when I take a view of those Principles which Mankind rely upon, I find it much easier to believe than to reason. Can I be safer than when God himself is my Guide? Shall I find more truth any where than in what God proposes? Or are the Mazes or Labyrinths of humane Argumentations easier to run through, than the Asseverations of Scriptures. This has made St. *Austin* to say, *de Trin.* l. 14. c. 1. *that many of the Faithful have Faith in a very high degree, though they have little or no Learning.*

*Socin.* That is, it is easier to swallow any thing, than to inquire whether it is true or no?

*Orthod.* No: For if you consider this Principle of the Authority of the Divine Revelation, you will find that it prevents all sorts of mistakes, and makes us give over reasoning and disputing, not because we design to avoid the labour and trouble of it; but because we are satisfy'd that here lies the Truth, and that it is impossible to find it any where else. That *whatsoever God is pleas'd to reveal is true*, is a proposition to which all Mortals in any capacity whatever give a most ready assent. There is none of us but what has in some measure or other Notions of God, agreeable to that Divine Being. In some they are more ripe and refin'd than in others, in *Christians* most of all. But all agree that as he is Wise and Holy, so he is True; and that what he delivers to us has an indelible Character of Truth.

This has not only been taught by us, but by

the Heathens themselves. *Homer* and *Hesiod* have acknowledg'd it. *Euripides* owns in *Helen*, v. 1164. & seq. that he has found nothing certain amongst Men but this, that the words of the Gods are true. And I think it is *Porphyrus*, a Man of mighty prejudice against *Christianity*, who comparing the ways of the *Greeks*, and of the *Jews* towards the attainment of the Truth, says that the latter who sought after it by Faith, that is, by the means of a Divine Revelation, were much more in the right than the former, who made use only of Reason to attain it. This once admitted, which indeed cannot be deny'd, I hope to let you see that I am not unjust to Reason. You will give me leave to consider it, before, in, and after the admitting of the Revelation.

*Socin.* Consider it which way you will.

*Orthod.* Faith then pre-supposes Reason. They must be Rational Creatures whom it is infus'd into, and without the one we are not capable of the other. Though the Almighty has an absolute power over us, yet he is pleas'd not to force our assent, but proposes the Faith and persuades us to it. *It comes by hearing*, says *St. Paul*, *Rom.* 10. 17. that is, it is not impos'd tyrannically without reasons or arguments to inforce its necessity and usefulness, but with all the proper methods to engage our assent. We believe because we have all the Reason in the World so to do. And Faith becomes our choice upon the noblest and strongest Motives that can be. I do Reason all the justice and honour which it can expect or deserve, by saying that our most Holy Religion is built on this most rational Principle,  
than



than which Man has none stronger, none more evident. *Whatsoever God reveals is true, and therefore the Mysteries of Christianity are true, because God has reveal'd them.* There is no exception against the first of these Propositions. In abundance of other things Reason is in the dark, but it meets with no sort of obscurity in this. The second then is its work and exercise, to which it ought to be apply'd. Reason must satisfy it self whether God has reveal'd what Religion offers? It is highly just that it should be so; or else every thing will be call'd Revelation, and every folly consecrated by pretending to have God for its Author. *Men will see vanity and divine lyes, saying, thus says the Lord, when the Lord has not spoken, Ezek. 22. 28.*

Thus St. Paul exhorts the *Thessalonians*, 1 Thess. 5. 21. to *prove all things and hold fast that which is good.* Compare all the Sects which have pretended to instruct Men in relation to a better Life. Try even those Systems which boast an infallible Judge. Let nothing that assumes the Name of Truth escape a severe inquiry. But when all is done, *hold fast that which is good*; to wit, that which we are perswaded cannot deceive us, even the Revelation of God. You see then a large Province for Reason to act in. And at the same time how easy is that task which brings us at last to the Author of our being to receive the Truth at his hands.

*Socin.* All this is well. But still vast difficulties present themselves. *First*, Where is this Revelation which you suppose? I know you will answer immediately, that it is to be found in the  
Sacred

Sacred Writings. But then you make it to be the Province of Reason, to satisfy it self in the Truth of the Revelation. If by this you mean the certainty of the Divine Records, you plunge your self in endless, and I will say, unsuccessful questions about their Inspiration. You will be forc'd to shew which of them are inspir'd, and which are not? You will find them who have pleaded for the Gospels of *Basilides*, *Apelles*, and *Tatianus*. For that according to *St. Peter*, *St. Paul*, *St. Thomas*, &c. For the Acts of the Apostles, by *St. Andrew*, *St. Philip*, &c. For other Epistles of *St. Paul* than those which we have, and several Writings related by *St. Hierom de Scriptor. Eccl.* in *Luc.* and censur'd by *Gelasius*, you will meet with *Prochorus*, and *Abdias the Babylonian*, and a world of spurious Writers pretending the Divine Revelation.

*Secondly*, If you pass from the certainty of the Records, to the particular places by which you affirm that God has reveal'd your Doctrine, their sence will be still disputed. It will be said that God indeed has reveal'd them, but not in the sence which you understand them in. And it will be the same as if you had no Revelation at all.

*Thirdly*, Supposing that Reason can effect all this, whose Reason must it be? Is it that, as you were pleas'd to speak, of the common Saylor, the Souldier, the labouring Man? Indeed the Principle will stand unmoveable, *what God has reveal'd is true*. But your Assertion that *he has reveal'd the Mysteries of Christian Religion* will be disputed, partly from the uncertainty whether the

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the Records are truly Divine, partly from the doubt of the sence of the particular places which you alledge. So that Reason in most Men will have nothing to do, because they are not capable of learned inquiries; and the few that are will wrangle with you to the end of the World.

*Orthod.* The first of your objections cannot be propos'd by a *Socinian*. It is of some force in the Mouth of a *Heathen*, or of a *Deist*. Were I to argue against either of them, I ought not to take it ill, if they oblig'd me to prove the certainty and inspiration of the Divine Records. Nor is this so difficult as you imagine. Criticks have made that a Controversy which is none in it self, and never was so before. So great and venerable are the Arguments by which the Divinity of the Sacred Writings is prov'd, that nothing has yet been said of any moment against it. It is to no purpose to insist on this with you, who own the *Scripture to be a compleat and infallible rule of Faith*. Nor is it more necessary to make it appear that the Books in dispute in the Primitive Ages of the Church were spurious. For besides that we have nothing left of them but their Names, and that too with some diversity; and that they obtain'd very little, because the cheat was presently found out; it would not be fair in you to put one to the trouble of disproving Books which you disprove your self. You admit with all the rest of *Christians* the *Canon* of the old and new Testament, *Pag.6.* of the Answer to Mr. Edwards. *Whereas* Mr. Edwards, says the Author, *would intimate that we reject divers Books of Scripture; on the contrary we receive into our*  
*Canon*

*Canon all the Books of Scripture that are receiv'd or own'd by the Church of England ; and we reject the Books rejected by the Church of England. So then all this difficulty is over.*

Your second objection is as easily resolv'd. When ever any thing is propos'd as Faith, the business of Reason is to see whether it is to be found in those Writings wherein we all confess that God has reveal'd what we ought to believe? Thus the *Beræans, Act 17. 11.* at the preaching of Paul Search'd the Scriptures daily, *whether the things which he said to them were so?* They found his allegations true, and therefore *many of them believ'd.* Nor will this, as you insinuate, resolve it self into a dispute about the sence of the places alledg'd. For, as we have said before, those places are so plain, so uncapable of any other sence than what they offer ; The deductions from them are so Natural and easy, that all disputing is wholly exciuded. For instance the Debate between you and me is about the Holy *Trinity.* You deny and I affirm it. We both agree upon a *Medium* to find whether it is so or no? And that is the Authority of the Sacred Writings. If in them there is a clear Revelation that God is one, and if I produce those Texts which plainly and naturally attributes those qualifications to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which are communicable to no created Being, and cannot be diverted any other way without changing the sence of the proposition, you must as the Noble and Candid Spirits of *Beræa* certainly yield.

Against your third objection I say that the unlearned part of the World is as capable of this

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as the learned ; Nay much more. For besides the plainness of the Revelation their perceptions in what they understand are more direct, and not clogg'd with subtilties as ours are. They have, I am afraid a more sincere respect for the Divine Revelation than we. Take an honest Country-Man, and ask him who is he that is *blessed over all for ever* ? He will answer immediately, *G O D*. Shew him in the Scripture that this is said of *Christ*. He will immediately conclude that *Christ* is *G O D*. Object to him that if *Christ* is God, and the Father God, then there are two *Gods*. He will immediately reply, No, They are but *one*, For God is but *O N E*. You may puzzle him with your Ratiocinations. He may be at a stand and hear you cry till you are hoarse, that two cannot be one, and that he does his Reason an injury. He will tell you that it is so indeed when he takes an account of his sheep and horses, but in what concerns his Religion, his *Bible* in his Reason ; It says so, and he believes it.

The Learned will not wrangle to the end of the World, except by the Learned you mean only the *Socinians*. I am sure and you cannot but be so too, that for many Ages, and now in this very Age the Learned of all Societies agree in this. And though the *Socinians* are infinitely fond of their objections against our *Mysteries*, yet I despair not to see them come over to the Faith. They are Rational, and at one time or other will be equitable Men.

But now let us see the Province of Reason, when it is satisfy'd that such, or such a truth is reveal'd.

*Socin.*

## 110 *A Conference between an*

*Socin.* I know what you are going to say, and it is this. That Reason having once satisfy'd it self of the certainty of the Revelation, it has no more to do ; but its duty is to submit to what God has reveal'd. Let a proposition contain never such a gross or palpable contradiction it must be swallow'd contentedly. But in good truth , can this be done ? If this is Faith and believing who can believe ?

*Orthod.* God can reveal neither contradiction nor error. There is a great difference between understanding the truth of a proposition, and the Nature of the thing propos'd. *God was manifest in the Flesh, and the Word was made Flesh*, are propositions so vastly plain , that no other sence can be made of them but this. *God has appear'd in our Nature*. There is no error , no contradiction in this. In a word we understand it. But the Nature of the thing propos'd is so unknown to us, and so much above us , that it is rash and bold for us to inquire into it , or imagine error, or contradiction in it. I say then , that the Truth once propos'd we ought to acquiesce in it: That Reason is to be silent, and give no way to further inquiries.

*Socin.* But can Reason be silent, when you impose on me the belief of that of which I have no kind of Notion ?

*Orthod.* If by Notion you mean an insight into the thing Reveal'd , you are unjust. We have discours'd already that the Nature of Faith is to be obscure, or else it is no Faith. This can be no difficulty at all. It is enough for us that we understand that God has propos'd such a thing, though.

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though we understand not at all the thing propos'd. I cannot apprehend how God assumes our Nature and is manifest in the Flesh ; But I apprehend that God tells it me in clear and express terms , and therefore I believe , and think not my poor ignorant Brain a competent Judge of God's Veracity.

*Socin.* But pray hold a little. Will you be satisfy'd of the deficiency of your method , if I shew you that after you have attain'd the certainty of the Revelation , you must believe propositions, which are inconsistent with and destroy one another ? You believe God to be one , and yet Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to be every one God. Does not the first proposition destroy the second, and the second the first ? How can he be one and three, three and one ?

*Orthod.* This is still begging of the question. God can propose nothing Contradictory or Inconsistent. I confess I cannot understand how this is, but it is reveal'd , therefore certainly true, and on that account I believe it.

*Socin.* You believe that Christ is God and Man ; Infinite and Finite ; Immortal and Mortal ; The Supreme , most High God, and yet suffering and Dying. He is God and he is sent ; He is God and yet prays to God. He is God over all, and yet subject to him who put all things under him. If this is not inconsistent, I do not know what inconsistency is.

*Orthod.* If *Plato*, *Aristotle* , or any of the Sons of Men should tell me this, I would speak as you do. But God is true , and he says all this. I adore the Divine Oeconomy , though I understand

stand it not. To be God and Man is no Contradiction. The Scripture represents Christ as *God blessed over all for ever*. It represents him also as a Man. Nothing can be more express than the declarations of his *Divinity*: Nothing more clear than those of his *Humanity*. Which part of the Revelation shall Reason overthrow? Convinç'd by the proofs of his *Humanity* you will say that he is no God. Another convinc'd by the proofs of his *Divinity* will deny that he is a Man. Thus Reason more inconsistent with it self than you fanſie Revelation to be; will reject every part and destroy the whole.

*Socin.* No. Reason will reconcile all, and by an easy explication will make him an inferior, or a deputed God and also the greatest of Men.

*Orthod.* A *Socinian* Explication! But the misery is that our Texts are not capable of any. *God Blessed over all for ever; The word was with God, The word was God*, and twenty more such places admit of no explication. *A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, in the Form of a Servant, humbling himself to the Death of the Cross, becoming Sin for us, and dying for Sinners*, contradicts all your explications. Away with this obstinacy which really debases Reason! Take the Revelation as a Rational Man; as it lies in all its parts; as it comes from God, who in the fullness of time has sent his Eternal Son to assume our Nature and become a Sacrifice for us.

*Socin.* But you can never perswade me that Reason has not as much right to examine the truth of the thing propos'd, as the proposition it self; and to reject it, if it is not agreeable to its Principles.

*Orthod.*



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*Orthod.* But you can never prove that Reason is capable of examining that which is above Reason, and such are things reveal'd. Their truth indeed depend from the conformity which they have with the Supreme Reason, which is God. But in respect to us their Truth consists not in their agreeableness to yours, or my Reason: But wholly in the Authority of the Revelation. They are true, because they are reveal'd.

*Socin.* But is not my Reason a part of that Supreme Reason? Truth is but one either in the Creator, or in the Creature. Revelation cannot make that true which appears to me unreasonable.

*Orthod.* You will never be weary of urging the same things over and over again. Whatsoever God reveals is true. But you say, it does not square with my apprehensions. Nay, it contradicts them. Therefore it is not true. What a strange way of Reasoning is this. Truth in God is truth in Man. Granted. But is it in the same extent or degree? Do we know as much as God? A spark will pretend to be as Luminous as the Body of the Sun. I see as through a glass darkly, and I will judge of him who inhabits a fullness of light which no Mortal can come near unto, Job 10. 4. *He must have Eyes of Flesh, and see as a Man sees*, or else I will not believe what he says. This is monstrous and not worth insisting upon. Let us therefore proceed.

Reason then being satisfy'd in the truth of the Revelation cannot act like it self, except it receives with the humblest and firmest submission what God has reveal'd; and as, *St. Paul* expresses it 2 Cor. 10. 5. *casts down imaginati-*

ons, *as yet*, REASONINGS, and every high thing that exalts it self against the Knowledge of God. And brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. It is a great part of a Christian's duty to correct the extravagances of Reason. For it is stubborn, restless and impatient of Government. It must be cast down and chain'd up, as one which, if let alone, will be outrageously mad. It will never want pretences to rise against its Sovereign, and in them it will obstinately persist.

This is the ground of those frequent exhortations in Scripture to mistrust Men's inquiries, and give glory to the veracity of God. *Rom. 3. 4. Let God be true but every Man a liar. Rom. 4. 20. Abraham* is commended for not following the insinuations of Reason, but giving himself wholly to the conduct of Faith. *He stagger'd not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in Faith giving Glory to God. St. Paul* would have us, *Rom. 11. 20. to stand by Faith*, the Principles of Reason being too weak, but this standing unmoveable. *Rom. 16. 26. He* tells us plainly and forcibly that Faith requires the obedience of our minds. *According to the revelation of the Mystery which was kept secret since the World began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the Prophets according to the commandment of the Everlasting God made known to all Nations for the obedience of Faith.*

*Socin.* But I must interrupt you, and tell you plainly and forcibly, that what colour soever the places which you have cited to prove Faith above Reason, this has none at all. You have found

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found Mystery, and Obedience of Faith together, and it has deceiv'd you. Read page 7. of that Print of ours call'd *an impartial account of the word Mystery*. The Author tells you that whatsoever is revealed is no more a *Mystery*.

*Orthod.* I wish it were not out of our way to give you some remarks on this same Print of yours. A perpetual Equivocation runs through the whole Work; and a willful misunderstanding of the words *Knowing, Delivering, Revealing, Making Manifest*, which imply indeed a discovery, but not at all an explication of the Truth reveal'd. Never did I see a greater unsincerity in any Writing. This very particular Text he has confin'd to the Vocation of the *Gentiles*, which extends to all Christian Mysteries, which are indeed Reveal'd as to their existence, the *quod sint*, as Divines speak, but not the *quid sint*, what they are in themselves. He has not given one single instance of a Mystery made known, but after the Revelation is still a Mystery. The Creation, Resurrection, Incarnation, *Trinity*, though clearly reveal'd, are still Mysteries. The very Attributes of God, though not only made manifest in the Scriptures, but also in a great measure obvious to Reason, as Eternity, Immen- sity, &c. are still Mysterious and Incomprehen- sible. Let me beg of you then not to interrupt me with objections of that nature, which really make against you. But suffer me to go on in shewing you how God in his word has establish'd the dominion of Faith over Reason, and the submission and obedience of Reason to Faith.

## 116. A Conference between an

*Socin.* I will not, on condition that you cite no Texts capable of being contested.

*Orthod.* I have not yet, and will not for the future. What can be plainer than 2 Cor. 5. 7. *We walk by Faith, not by sight?* We trust not to our little Reasonings, which we are so weak as to call *sight* and demonstration, but rely upon a higher, nobler, and more infallible Principle, Faith in God. 1 Cor. 2. 4, 5. St. Paul declares that his preaching has not been drawn from Mens Arguments, or adorn'd with a vain ostentation of Eloquence; *But in demonstration of the Spirit and power of God*; that is by the Writings of the Prophets inspir'd by the Holy Spirit, by the voice of the Spirit it self, by the Miracles of CHRIST and his Apostles, as Origen expresses it, 1. 5. *contr. Cels.* That your Faith should not stand in the Wisdom of Men, but of God. That your Faith should not rest upon Men's Arguments but the Authority of God. Colos. 1. 23. He would have the Colossians to crush and suppress the suggestions of Reason and sense and continue in the Faith settled and grounded, and not be mov'd away from the hope of the Gospel. The same is urg'd 1 Pet. 1. 7, 8. and indeed in very many other places which it would be too tedious to cite. But what has the Saviour of the World said himself in the case? Joh. 20. 29. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believ'd.*

*Socin.* Here I must interrupt you. This relates to the particular Fact of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ: It does not infer at all the belief of a doctrine contrary to my Reason. You offer no violence to the mind, when upon a solid Testimony

mony I am perswaded that such a thing or Person is or has been. I never was at *Rome*; But I believe as firmly as the *Romans* themselves that there is such a place. I never was bless'd with the sight of my Saviour, or acquainted with the Glory of his Resurrection; yet I believe as firmly as any one that he was in the World, and rose from the dead. But what is all this to your Doctrines?

*Orthod.* Be not so injurious to a Noble Passage, which though occasion'd by a particular matter of Fact, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, yet is a General maxim and of a vast influence on Religion. It holds not only as to the Resurrection, but also as to all Reveal'd Truths. Blessed are those who believe what they have not seen with the Eyes of the Body: and they also are Blessed who believe what they cannot see with the Eyes of the Mind! Happy in both, that they come to God with an absolute resignation of their Reason. Seeing must not be restrain'd to sense, but extended to whatsoever God proposes. Doctrines as well as Matters of Fact rely upon the Divine Authority.

But let us see how *CHRIST*, the Light of the World, has done in the delivery of his Heavenly Doctrine. Has he courted our Minds to an assent by explaining the Nature of the Mysteries which he offers? Or after the manner of the then Philosophers, by disputing and endeavouring to remove the prejudices of Reason? Not at all, but first he establishes his own Authority, and then commands our belief. This grand point once settled, He tells us, Mark 16. 16.

## 118 A Conference between an

*He that believes shall be sav'd, he that believes not shall be damn'd.*

Once more *CHRIST* gives the *Jews* no liberty of examining his doctrine, or, as you Gentlemen of the *Socinian* perswasion are us'd to do, to admit or reject it, as you think it agreeable, or disagreeable to your Reason. He proves what he is by two undeniable Principles. The *First*, is the Prophecies accomplish'd in him. *Act. 10. 43. To him give all the Prophets witness.* The *Second* is the Miracles which he does. *Job. 10. 37, 38. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though you believe not me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him. And before v. 25. the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. He had reveal'd to them a great Mystery, viz. his Unity with the Father, an Unity of Nature and Essence. v. 30. I and my Father are one.* The Reason of the *Jews* stumbles at this, and even to that degree, that they take up stones to stone him. He uses no other Arguments; but will have them to obey and submit; and this upon the account of the greatest and most convincing demonstration that can be, even the miraculous works of God. To deal sincerely, can any thing be objected against this?

*Socin.* Yes truly. You know that we deny this to be an Unity of Nature, and appeal to *v. 36.* But not to insist on this, which we have often objected, and you pretend to have as often answer'd, and not start from the main question; I say that he proves nothing, who proves too much. You strain the point too high. You not only

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only debase, but totally extinguish Reason. You leave it bare, naked, destitute, and like the Idols, Psam. 115. 5. *Which have Eyes and see not, Mouths and speak not.* Have a care of v. 8. *They that make them are like unto them.*

Is it to be imagin'd that we can renounce Reason? The will indeed is free and may embrace and reject. But the Mind is not capable of choice. It must necessarily assent or dissent. It can never be brought to believe a contradiction. For my part, I openly declare, that against what part soever of my self I practise self denial, it shall never be against my Reason.

*Orthod.* How often have we said, and how often must we say it again, That nothing in Religion is contrary to the Principles of true Reason? That what you call Contradictions are not real, because God can reveal no contradiction: and that Reason over-rules all its reluctancies by that most Rational Principle, that we owe our assent to what God has reveal'd. This is not then to renounce your Reason, but only its irregularities and excesses; to divest it of its pride and folly; and bring it to all the purity and strength of which it is capable on this side the grave.

But how can one hear without horror, that you will not practise self denial against your Reason, that is, you are resolv'd not to be a *Christian*? For he that is so, must, as we have said already, *bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*. There is a poverty of Spirit to which *C H R I S T* has annex'd a blessing. The living contentedly under the hard circumstances of want, and a willingness to

part with our riches to become poor for *CHRIST*'s sake is but one part of it. The other consists in robbing the mind of *oppositions of science falsely so call'd*, which puffs us up, and through the vain additions of Philosophy gives us a high opinion of our selves. The various notions which we have of things, are the riches of our mind, which we must be ready to part with, when ever *CHRIST* commands it. Learning without Piety looks upon this as an injury to Reason; unwilling to stoop, and be overcome; But Piety with Learning puts the Servant of God in that humble frame of submission to what he reveals.

*Socin.* This is perfect *Enthusiasm* and *Fanaticism* all over. This the Priest perswades the people to, that he may command their Faith. That point gain'd, he will quickly dispose of the rest.

*Orthod.* If this is *Enthusiasm* and *Fanaticism*, then all the World, but the *Socinians*, have been *Enthusiasts* and *Fanatics*. The first Men of the World liv'd altogether by Faith. The Apostle gives the same Character to the *Patriarchs*, and *Prophets*. Whatsoever they did was the Work of Faith. Reason then was in subjection to it. But when Man substracted himself from the Service of God, and suffer'd himself to be guided by his own notions, then Reason grew proud, shook off the easy yolk, and gave birth to the opinions of Philosophers, whom *Tertullian* calls elegantly *Hæreticorum Patriarchas*, the *Patriarchs of Hereticks*.

Some of the wise Heathens themselves were  
not



not insensible how many errors this pretence of Reason threw them into. *Tully lib. 3. de nat. Deor.* makes *Cotta* to speak smartly to this purpose against *Balbus* the Stoick. I omit *Socrates* and *Plato*. *Philostratus de vit. Apollon. lib. 5. c. 14.* asserts that *Philosophy* is good to lead us into the Knowledge of Natural, but not at all of Divine Truths. And *Jamblicus* is positive that *Man* by the strength of Reason cannot understand Sacred and Religious matters.

To increase the number of those *Enthusiasts* I dare to say that this has been the Unanimous sense of the Fathers. Hence that saying of *St. Austin Epist. 3.* so highly Reverenc'd by the succeeding Ages. *Tota Ratio facti est potentia facientis.* All the Reason which we can give of any thing that is done, is his power who does it. And the great Arch-Bishop of *Milan* in *Epist. ad Rom.* *Magni meriti est apud Deum, qui contra scientiam suam Deo credidit, non dubitans posse illum, utpote Deum, quod secundum mundi rationem fieri non possit.* He is very dear to God, who believes God against all the Principles of his Reason, not doubting but that he can, as God, do that which cannot be done according to the Course and Reason of the World.

You stare at this as very strange and unaccountable. But yet this is the Language of the Masters of the Church. Thus spoke these Primitive Bishops, and if we have any Zeal for Primitive Truths and Primitive Manners, we ought to speak so too. Nay, this Notion is so Universal, that of all them who ever profess'd a Reveal'd Religion, none but the *Socinians* have oppos'd

pos'd it. The very Jews themselves were not without it. The Author of the ancient Book *Cofri par.* 4. c. 27. says that *Abraham* came first to the knowledge of God by Reason; but that after God had Reveal'd himself to him, he gave over all his Arguments to stick to the Revelation. And that the old *Rabbins* understood the 12. of *Genesis v. 1. Get thee out of thy Country*, and *Gen. 15. 5. And he brought him forth abroad*, in an Allegorical sence; as if God by these Words had commanded him to go from himself, his humane way of apprehensions, his weak ratiocinations, and leave himself wholly to his conduct. I confess, the Allegory is more pious than solid: It has a tincture of *Rabbinism* all over. But still it is home to the point which I was to prove; that the *Jews* in this had the same notion with the *Christians*, that when Reason is satisfy'd that the Almighty speaks, it ought to submit, and stifle all its pretended contradictions.

*Socin.* If the Ancient *Jews* were so much for believing, how come the Modern to be so incredulous? They are as mighty sticklers as we for the Unity of the Great God. They deny *CHRIST* to be God. Yet to them were committed the Oracles of God. How comes it then that they are not affected with that Revelation of a *Trinity* which you pretend to be so plain and express?

*Orthod.* It will carry us too far out of our subject to lay down the Causes of their Incredulity. But yet it must be said that in their disputes with us, they have been more sincere than you, as to the main point on which this Controversy turns.

For

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For they have not pretended to Reason about this, or build their denial upon imaginary Contradictions, the weak efforts of a Reason at a stand; but they have rejected all the new Dispensation, and disown'd *CHRIST* to be the *MESSIAS*. In a word they have disputed the Revelation: A Topick which you cannot pretend to, because you admit the Sacred Writings of the New Testament. I shall say no more to this, but dispatch the third consideration, and see the use of Reason after Faith is admitted, and put your patience to a new trial?

*Socin.* You command my attention.

*Orthod.* I say then that Reason thus resign'd ceases not to act. The noble Faculty has still a large Field to exercise it self in. For though it supposes the *Axiomata*, the first Principles of *Christianity*, the Divine Mysteries to be so certain, as not to be capable of the least doubt, but to be admitted with the most humble adoration, and sincere and firm assent that can be; yet there are some Universal, and some Particular dependent, inferior Truths which it has the liberty to consider. There are things which we know by Faith alone, others by Reason alone, and others by Faith and Reason together.

Of the first sort are the Mysteries of the Holy Trinity, Incarnation, Resurrection, &c. It is of these that *St. Ambrose de vocat. Gent.* says excellently, *Magna est fortitudo consensionis cui ad sequendum veritatem Auctoritas sufficit etiam latente ratione.* That assent has a great force, which, though we cannot see the Reason of things, yet makes us to embrace the Truth on the bare account of Authority. A doctrine

doctrine so known, so reverenc'd in the Primitive Church, that St. *Austin* is so far from pretending that we can dispute about them, that when the Philosophers would argue against them who had embrac'd *Christianity*, he makes them answer thus *Serm.* 189. *de temp. Accepto Baptismo, hoc dicimus, Fidelis factus sum, Credo quod Nescio. Having receiv'd Baptism we say this, I am become a Christian, I believe what I cannot understand.* In this Reason has nothing to do, I am altogether determin'd by Faith. It is from thence that the School-men have laid this as a Principle in their barbarous way of speaking, that *Habitus Fidei non est discursivus, sed animus unico actu fertur in objectum materiale propter formale.* Which in plain *English* is this, that Faith depends not from Reason and Discourse, but that the Soul of Man by the same act embraces the truth propos'd, a secondary sort of an object, upon the account of the first, which is God revealing it to us.

Of the second sort is whatsoever is not of Faith, but only serves to illustrate and confirm, to defend and propagate it. All our Arguments are the product of Reason. There is a Divine Oeconomy and Coherence in the Sacred Writings which it perceives, and from which it draws inferences: An *Analogy* of Faith which by the concord and relation of the several parts make up the whole body of Divinity. It is a judicious observation of St. *Austin*, *de Trin. lib. 14. c. 1.* that as there are things which can never be understood except they are believ'd, so there are things which can never be believ'd except they are understood.

And

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And such are *Prophecies*, of which it is said 2 *Pet.* 1. 19. *We have also a more sure word of Prophecy, whercunto you do well that you take heed as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day Star arise in your Hearts.* A Prophecy cannot be believ'd, except Reason has made way to Faith, by being convinc'd of its accomplishment. Thus CHRIST argu'd *Luk.* 24. 44. *These are the words which I spoke to you whilst I was with you, that all things must be fulfill'd which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me.* For though Prophecy has the Sanction of the Divine Authority, and is to be assented unto, even as to its future accomplishment, because none of the Words of God can fall to the ground; yet when you tell me that it is accomplish'd, it is altogether the work of my Reason, to examine whether it is so, or no?

God by his Prophets, and indeed by the two first Dispensations, that of Nature, and that of the Law, has promis'd that a MESSIAS should come for the Redemption of Mankind. The Prophecies concerning him are many, and express. Some describe his Nature, others his Person: Some his miraculous Works, others his Heavenly Doctrine: Some the time and place of his coming, others his Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, &c. All this is true, and Antecedently commands our belief, because God has spoke it. But whether this or that Person is the MESSIAS, must depend from an examination in whom all these things are fulfill'd: Whether in this, or that Man. And this is certainly the Work of Reason.

The

The same must be said of Miracles. There is not a more forcible Argument that the Author of Nature has Reveal'd a Doctrine, than when he alters or suspends its ordinary course to confirm it. But still I have a Liberty to try whether the Spirits are of God? Whether it is a real Miracle, and not an Illusion? Whether the Matter of Fact is true? Thus *Act. 13. 12. Sergius Paulus*, who before is call'd a Prudent Man, seeing *Elymas* by the bare speaking of *St. Paul* struck with blindness, *believ'd, being astonish'd at the Doctrine of the Lord*. The Miracle was certainly the ground of his Faith. But he had not deserv'd the name of a Prudent Man, if he had not satisfy'd himself of the Truth of the Miracle.

And in this *Christianity* appears Venerable to me beyond any thing that Men ever call'd Religion, that it is so far from restraining Reason where it ought to act, that it gives it the greatest scope imaginable. I am *astonish'd at*, or much better as the *Latin* Interpreter reads it, I *admire* that Doctrine of the Lord, which, though resolv'd into the Authority of him that reveals it, yet is embrac'd upon the most Rational Motives that can be.

I am sure you will be pleas'd, when I tell you that *Criticizing* is also the Work of Reason. I mean by *Criticizing* that acute judgment by which we reject what is spurious, and take up what is genuine and certain, holding to the Purity and Sincerity of Ancient Copies, establishing true Readings, and making Translations as exact and as agreeable as can be to the Original. All that which facilitates the understanding of the difficult places

places of Scripture, must be put in the number. This has made Interpreters, Commentators, Annotators, and a world of Polemick Writers who have deserv'd well of Religion in general, and have been in particular the Glory of the *Reformation*. The Church of *Rome* is oblig'd to us for that sort of Learning, and indeed for all manner of Knowledge; there being no part of it but what has been reviv'd by Protestants, and most of all by *English* Writers. Though of these last, the Learned World has just cause to complain, that so many incomparable Books have been confin'd to their own natural Language. I confess also, and that to my grief, that our great love and study of the Eastern Languages seems to forsake us, and go over to our Adversaries.

*Socin.* I am sorry for it too. But now you commend *Criticks*, what do you think of Us as to that particular.

*Orthod.* I wish you would not oblige me to run out of my Subject. But since you will have me give you my sence of this, I beg of you to forgive me, if I say that you are the most lamentable Criticks in the World. Your out-landish Authors, I mean them who are openly *Socinians*, except some tolerable good Latin, interlarded now and then with a Greek Phrase, are not worth reading. Those that keep behind the Curtain are much better. But when they come to the points in dispute, they are as weak and as insufferable as the other. Your *English* Writers are Men of much more digested thoughts, and a purer way of expression. As long as they keep within their pretended difficulties, they are like  
to

to impose. But when they are brought to the Test, that is, to the Sacred Writings, their *Criticisms* are so mean, so strange, so unsincere ; their evasions are so many, so visible, so unnatural, what they have to say is so unsatisfactory, and so foreign to the thing, that of all Men I would not have you set up for Criticks. But to return.

There are things which we know both by Faith and Reason. Such is the existence of God. Rom. 1. 19, 20. *That which may be known of God is manifest to them : For God has shew'd it to them. For the invisible things of him from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his Eternal Power and Godhead.* That Reason must strangely act against it self which denies the Being of God. But though this is so plain as to come within every Man's capacity, yet the *Existence* of God is also the object of our Faith. We may say the same of his Unity, Immenstity, Omnipresencé, Almighty Power, and his other Divine Attributes, particularly that Providence by which he governs us and the World, Heb. 11. 6. *He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

I am also apt to think, that though Faith teaches us that *in Adam all die ; that we have all sinned and come short of the Glory of God*, and that our Conversion to God is a new Creation, *being Created in Jesus Christ unto good Works ;* yet Reason in a great measure may be acquainted with the corruption of our Nature. We cannot come out of the hands of God, with that darkness  
ness



ness of Mind, that World of evil Inclinations, and that tendency to Sin which we have, There is that in Man which of one side convinces him of his Greatness and Excellency; and of the other, of his Baseness and Misery. We have an incredible desire of Happiness, and yet pursue those things which end in our ruine. So great a Contradiction cannot come from the All-wise and Merciful Creatour. Answer me not that we Sin by Imitation. It is a poor and silly Notion, which leaves the Difficulty whole and unresolv'd.

Reason also as well as Faith acquaints us with the Immortality of the Soul, and the certainty of a State of Rewards and Punishments after this Life. In this the generality of the Wise Heathens agreed. *Cum de animorum eternitate discimus*, says Seneca, Epist. 117. *non leve momentum apud nos habet consensus hominum aut timendum inferos, aut colentium.* When we dispute of the Eternity of the Soul, the Universal consent of Men who either fear or adore the Powers below, is of no small importance. I make use of that publick Perswasion. And Macrobius de Som. Scip. l. 1. c. 14. *Obtinuit non minus de incorporalitate animæ quam de immortalitate sententia.* The opinion of the Souls Immateriality has been as generally receiv'd as that of its Immortality.

But not to multiply any more instances, let us conclude with the Divinity of the Sacred Writings: They are receiv'd by us not only with the homage of an humble Faith, but also by strong convictions of Reason. I take it to be granted by all Christian Societies that the Holy

Scriptures are divinely inspir'd. This is a point of their Faith, and indeed the foundation of all the rest. The *Socinians* themselves who have deny'd so many things, never controverted before, agree with them in this. But yet I am perswaded that Reason does not want several noble and substantial Arguments to prove it.

That which *Origen* contr. Cels. *Theodoret* Præfat. in Ps. St. *Austin*, and the generality of the Fathers have us'd, seems to me Irrefragable. And that is, the vast number of *Prophecies* which we find to have receiv'd their accomplishment. For all Mankind assert Prophecy to be the Gift and Work of God, and only in his Power. Isa. 41.23. *Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are Gods.* And *Pacuvius* in Gell. lib. 14. c. 1. *Nam si qui, quæ evenitura sunt provideant, æquiparent Jovi.* An Argument truly call'd by the Ancients ἀποδείκνυσι, and by the Apostle 1 Cor. 2. 4. ἀποδείξις πνευματική, the demonstration of the Spirit, to distinguish it from the ἀποδείξις δυνάμει, the demonstration of Power, which consists in miraculous operations. And therefore that Record is truly divine in which God has left such splendid and lasting monuments of his Holy Spirit.

But if a Book may truly be call'd Divine which transcends all Books whatsoever, that Collection which we have of the Sacred Writings justly deserves that name. For besides that it can be made to appear that all the Theology, all the Philosophy, all the Rites, all the Laws, all the Manners and Customs, all the Heroes of the Heathens, are deriv'd from thence; and that this

Truth

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Truth is not unperceivable, though oppress'd and eclips'd with the interposition of innumerable Fables and Lyes ; pray what Book can compare with this for Antiquity, for certainty in the discovery of the Creation of the World, the formation of all things, the History of the first Ages ; but above all for that vast number of Precepts of Morality, of excellent rules of Piety and Holiness, by which Man is acquainted with his duty to God and to his fellow Creatures, and has the promise of an Eternal State as a Reward of his Obedience.

What Man ever spoke or could ever speak in the Stile of the Sacred Writings ? It is every where Inimitable, and does not surprise by a numerous train of pompous expressions, but by a natural and inward Majesty, which no mortal Oratory can personate. It speaks to the Heart as well as to the Ears, and converts as well as instructs us. God has shew'd himself no where better than in his Word. In his operations he acts, but in this he speaks like God. Whosoever reads attentively the Holy Scriptures, must needs upon the whole conclude that it is a Work which infinitely exceeds the most refin'd Reason, the most intense Capacity, and the vastest Industry of Man.

I will say no more ; only let me beg of you to lay this all together, and then tell me whether I am an Enemy to Reason, and whether it has receiv'd any injury from me.

*Socin.* Your way of speaking shews the Excellency of Reason, and you make an admirable use of it against it self. You leave me but one thing

to desire, and that is, that I could be so far satisfy'd with what you have said, as to assent to it. But it is not in my power; Nor think I myself overcome, though I cannot answer your Arguments. For when all is done my Reason must be the Judge, and it will not suffer me to believe your Mysteries. I know that you will tell me that this is obstinacy, and that at this rate no Man will ever be convinc'd of his errors, but will make this his last refuge, that he cannot indeed contradict the truth offer'd, but that his Reason will not suffer him to submit. I grant all this: But still as long as I act sincerely in it, I may be pity'd, but I cannot be blam'd.

*Orthod.* You have often told me of your sincerity in this matter: But I am afraid you have not the true notion of it.

*Socin.* I understand by it a serious mind, willing to know the truth, and taking all the ways that it can to attain it. I have study'd my own heart, and if I can pretend to any knowledge of myself, I think that I am in that very disposition.

*Orthod.* There is a great deal more in it than all this comes to. Self-love will turn it self into a thousand shapes and represent us to our selves quite otherwise than really we are. Information indeed is the way to Truth; But other qualifications must be suppos'd without which it is not attainable. Bare arguing will never do. The Soul must be purify'd of those lusts which are so many clouds interposing between us and the Truth. I shall never believe a Man sincere in this, till a substantial Piety, with an uniform, humble, and mortify'd Life has made way to  
Divine

## Orth. Christian and a Socinian. 133

Divine Illuminations. I take the grand obstacle to Faith, not so much to consist in what we call Reason, as in the indisposition of the heart which resists the impressions of the Grace and Spirit of God. Sincerity in our obedience to *CHRIST'S* holy precepts, is the Touch-stone of that other which we pretend to. One may practise Religion though he understands it not; but it can never be understood, except it be seriously practis'd. As long as we live a life of sense and neglect the duties of Religion, we shall ever wrangle with the points propos'd to our belief. Oblige me in not separating two things so wholly depending on one another.

*Socin.* I perfectly agree with you in this. But I believe that God is merciful; and that there is an allowance for invincible errors.

*Orthod.* I believe so too. But the error which you have espous'd is certainly a damnable error, and is not invincible. He who never had a revelation of the Gospel, and lives up to the light of nature, will no doubt find that the mercies of God are not so confin'd as some Zealots have made them. But you have had it; and that too attested with the blood of Martyrs, and the voice of the Catholick Church, which at this very time from all the parts of the World exclaims against, and condemns you. How guilty is that confidence, which, under the pretence of contradictions and poor Criticisms, dares refuse an assent to God speaking in his Holy Scriptures, and to his Church, declaring her sense of those matters in all her decrees! Your error indeed is invincible, not because you cannot, but because you will not be overcome.

## 134 *A Conference between, &c.*

*Socin.* But who is a better judge than my self, whether I can or no ?

*Orthod.* All this is trifling with God and your self. Every Man will give the same Answer, and by this defend not only the most pernicious errors, but even the most sinful habits. However take the great help which God has provided in this case, and that is Prayer. Be never wanting in your publick and private Adorations of God, to pour your Heart before him with humility and fervency ; that he would open your Eyes and remove from you blindness and hardness of Heart. Alas, my Friend, the night of your Life and mine is far spent. The day is at hand. Few steps more and we launch into *Eternity*. Have pity on your own Soul, and hasten to secure your self.

*Socin.* I cannot however but express my acknowledgment for your good and serious advice. I promise you that I will consider of it in earnest. But it grows late, and I fear we have no more time than what will serve to take another turn in this fine Garden, and then draw home.

*Orthod.* Besure to be as good as your word.

*Socin.* I will.

*Orthod.* Then I am almost confident that you will have done *Socinianizing*.

*F I N I S.*

